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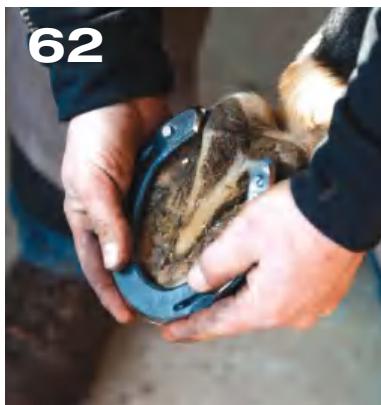
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Editor's Note

Balanced Riding

I was at a local one-day hunter/jumper competition several years ago with a barn-mate who was competing her new hunter. He was well schooled but being a bit naughty, trying to pull her petite frame out of the saddle after the fences and playing in the corners. She asked if I would take him in an over-fences class because I was taller and had more leverage for his antics.

My own horse was green, so I'd been jumping only crossrails, which I pointed out to her. But my barn-mate really wanted her horse schooled, so I warmed him up at first thinking: *I really hope I don't chip.*

Fortunately, I quickly switched gears and focused on the skills I'd learned over the years: position, pace, track and straightness. As I started the course, I thought of those skills, paying special attention to pace—I have a slowpoke tendency. The result was eight tidy distances and a smooth course. When my barn-mate asked if I'd ride her horse in the next few classes, I gave a very quick "YES!"

I recalled this experience after reading a few stories in this month's issue. The first was by Skidmore College's Cindy Ford (page 54), who describes practicing course work over ground poles, which initially might seem simple, but you use the same skills over both poles and jumps. In the story, she discusses establishing a canter that has "plenty of engine and yet is still polite" because mistakes often occur when a rider doesn't establish this canter on course or loses it midway through. "A consistent, balanced canter is essential to producing a good round over jumps," she says.

Cindy's comments echo those in columns by Bernie Traurig (page 40) and Jim Wofford (page 31). Bernie talks about the American forward seat and forward riding system, fundamentals set forth by Italian cavalry officer Federico Caprilli in the early 1900s. Bernie explains how "for the most part for horses who jump, the ideal is connected gaits in forward balance." Jim also discusses Caprilli, saying that the officer's main idea was that "horses could carry the weight of soldiers more efficiently when that weight was over their shoulders rather than their backs."

At the time I was riding my barn-mate's horse, I didn't think much about the origin of the skills I was using, just that they worked. But understanding it makes me feel like a more solid horseman all these years later. I hope the stories have the same effect on you.

Take care.

Sandra

Sandra Oliynyk
Editor

Tip of the Month

"The difference between dressage and forward schooling is not so much about the movements the horse is required to execute as it is about the manner and balance in which he executes them."

—Bernie Traurig, page 40



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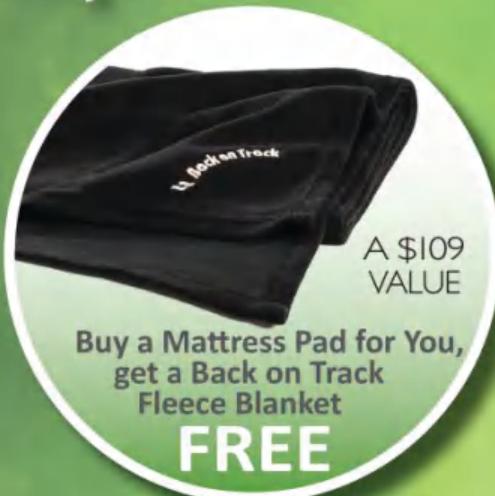
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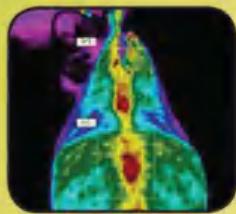
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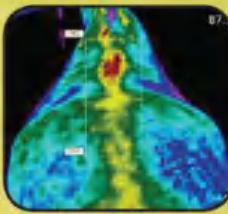
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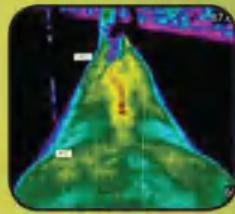
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George H. Morris is the former chef d'équipe of the U.S. Equestrian Federation Show Jumping Team. He serves on the USEF National Jumper Committee and Planning Committee, is an adviser to the USEF High-Performance Show Jumping Committee and is president of the Show Jumping Hall of Fame.

Who Gets an A Grade for Turnout?

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1 This photo is instructive because it shows you don't have to jump—the rider is going over a rail on the ground. Just as for any other sport, you first must practice at a basic level. If you're lifting weights, you start at 5 pounds and then move up. I'm not thrilled if they're at a show where I don't think there should be ground-pole classes.

This is an athletic child with confidence. The stirrup iron needs to be angled so that the outside branch is ahead of the inside and the little toe touches the outside branch, which U.S. Show-Jumping Coach Bert de Némethy taught me. This is not only aesthetically better, but it provides security while allowing a flexing of the ankle, which improves suppleness of the leg. Her heels are down and her toes are out and she has contact in her calf.

Her seat is excellent, just out of the saddle enough. Her posture is good and her eyes are up looking to where she is going. Her hand position is in a short crest release with a soft rein, though it should be slack, not with a loop. When jumping, she probably needs to use a long release, reaching halfway up the neck and grabbing mane. Novice riders or riders on green horses should use the long release. I'm very proud that I've taught the long release, which is the first stage of a rider's education.

This horse is a little big for the rider, but he is wonderful. Horses like this are worth as much as a grand prix horse. If it weren't for the school horses at the Ox Ridge Hunt Club, I wouldn't be where I am. I can't critique his jumping form because he's just taking a big canter stride over the rail.

He looks clean and well cared for. The turnout is not at the A-game. The saddle pad is big and you can see too much of the elastic part of the girth.



2 This rider is very secure in the saddle. Her leg is reminiscent of the leg I grew up with in the 1950s where the foot was on the inside of the iron, the heel was well down and the toe was turned out 45 degrees. It provides a viselike grip for cross-country jumping, but it's not supple enough for today's competitive riding. Now we put the foot on the outside of the iron closer to the toe. To modernize this rider's leg, she needs to work without stirrups so her toes don't turn out so much.

This rider is ducking, throwing her chest down a little on the horse's neck, which pushes her buttocks up too high. She's using a textbook long crest release and maybe she's grabbing a piece of mane, which is appropriate because the horse looks green. He's jumping very high, but he's not tight with his hind end. The virtue of this release is that it ensures the horse has his head. The reins are loose, and the rider is held in jumping position by pressing on the horse's neck. It prevents the rider from falling back and hitting the horse in the mouth. There are lots of critics of this release who don't remember their early days of riding or who don't ride green horses or who haven't taught a lot of beginners.

The horse is attractive, but his knees are pointing down and his legs are loose below them. This is his style, but it could be improved by rolling out a ground line from a fence 6 to 8 inches and galloping to it in a half-seat. Before the fence, you would throw away his head to let him figure out how to get over the jump. If the horse has a stiff topline, this could help him relax and his legs might get better.

The turnout is not up to my standard. His mane is sticking up, his coat doesn't shine and he has a square blue pad. She should be wearing a belt.



3 The standard is covering up this rider's stirrup position, but the iron looks well placed at a right angle to the girth. She needs to have more weight in the heel, and her leg is pivoting around her knee and swinging back. This can happen on a small narrow-slabbed horse like this. I would shorten the stirrup a hole or two so the rider has more contact with her calf. Contact of the leg is very dependent on rider and horse conformation. For a short rider on a well-sprung horse, the leg contact will come all the way down the horse's side. For a long-legged rider on a narrow-sided horse, the contact will be higher. The stirrup leathers need to be adjusted accordingly. The rider should work over crossrails to keep her heel down.

Her seat is excellent. There are no signs that she is jumping ahead or dropping back. Her back is slightly roached, which would be helped by a shorter stirrup. Again, we have a long release, but this about 2 inches too far up the neck. It should be only halfway. Also, the reins are a little too short. In a long release, the reins should be loose. Once she has fixed her leg and has more security, she could graduate to the short release. But overall, she's doing a nice job.

This is a cute horse who looks light and sensitive. His knees are up and even, though I'd like to see him a little tighter in his front end. He is a little loose from his knee to the point of his toe, though he's not hanging. He's got a flat back and his hind end is trailing a bit. He might jump better over a higher fence.

The horse appears to be in good health, but I don't like his unruly mane and the blue saddle pad. I think his chrome could be a little whiter. Her shirt is hanging out, which I don't like, as is her braid. The turnout isn't as polished as I like to see.



4 This rider has a very good leg position, though I would put her foot on the outside of the iron. Again, this position reminds me of how we used to ride with a more viselike grip. The stirrup length looks correct.

Her buttocks are too far out of the saddle, which is indicative that she is jumping for her horse instead of closing her leg to the jump. Approaching a fence, she needs to close her leg, relax her hand and let the horse do the work. Her back is naturally slightly hollow just above the belt, and her eyes are up. Her long crest release is a little mannered with her wrists bent and her hands floating above the horse's neck, but it's better than hitting the horse in the mouth. The point of a crest release is that the rider puts the weight of her upper body in her hands so the horse's neck serves as a platform to support it. Once you have the security and timing, a rider can graduate to a short crest release and then an automatic release, where you wean yourself off of the horse's neck.

This is a beautiful horse with a wonderful expression in his eyes and ears. His knees are up by his eyeballs. He's just stepping over this fence, and his back is hollow, which can happen when a fence has excessive ground lines like this. Some steppers are dulled by too much longeing or jumping. The most important part of training is keeping a horse's interest.

He is beautifully turned out. His weight is good, he is bathed, his coat shines, he is braided and his saddle pad fits. The rider is appropriately dressed—everything fitting well and clean. The only thing I would change is that the saddle looks a little new. She needs to leave it out in the rain, clean it with saddle soap and oil it so it loses its orange look and shine. But overall, their turnout gets an A grade. ☀

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Do you want George Morris to critique your riding? If so, send in a color photograph, at least 3 x 5 inches, taken from the side, in which your position is not covered by a standard. Mail it to Jumping Clinic, Practical Horseman, 656 Quince Orchard Rd., Suite 600, Gaithersburg, MD 20878 or email a high-resolution (300 dpi) copy to Practical Horseman@equinetwork.com. Please indicate photographer's name/contact information if professionally taken.

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Whether I am judging a model class, evaluating a prospect for a client or sizing up the yearlings at home, I first stand back and look for an overall impression of balance and symmetry. My ideal horse "fits" in a square box. By that, I mean he is defined by matching and equal parts, both front to back and side to side. This allows for athletic ability, soundness, trainability and longevity in the job.

A horse who fits in a box will have a body that is made up of one-third shoulder, one-third back and one-third hindquarters. I like to see the withers and point of croup at the same level. The horse's stance, from point of shoulder to buttock, should equal the distance from the height of the withers to the ground.

I also always look at the eye because I want to see a horse with clear, alert vision. From the head, I move down the neck to the shoulders, along the back to the hind end and leg construction.

For jumpers, the emphasis should be on hindquarters with a good length from the hipbone to the point of the buttock for power off the ground. For dressage horses, a more upright build and a shorter neck are desired. For hunters, I look for a level topline, a well-sloped shoulder for fluid movement and the ability to lift in the air over fences as well as quality and typiness.



Owner of Maplewood Stables in Reno, Nevada, **Julie Winkel** has been a U.S. Equestrian Federation "R" hunter breeding judge for 30 years and a Canadian Equestrian Federation "S" judge for more than 15 years. She co-chairs the USEF Licensed Officials Committee and serves on the Young Jumper Championships and USHJA board

of directors. Julie has judged pony and hunter breeding at Devon and Upperville, the Sallie B. Wheeler Championship and the USHJA Hunter International Derby. She hosts annual sporthorse inspection tours at her facility, where she stands her grand-prix stallions, Cartouche Z and Osilvis. As a rider, trainer, judge and breeder, Julie focuses on which traits make athletic horses and how structure affects soundness.

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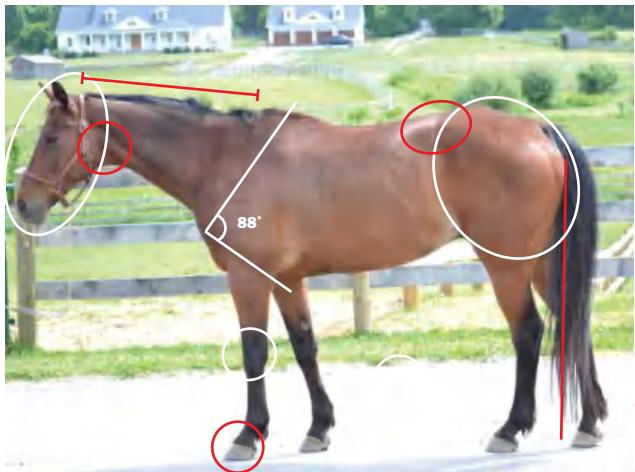
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There is no question that our winner has the best overall balance of the group. His body fits in a box with equal parts shoulder, midsection and hindquarter. Additionally, he is as long as he is tall.

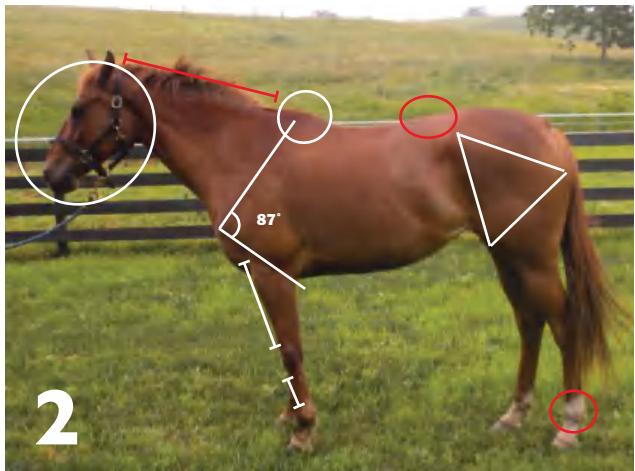
He has a sweet eye set on an attractive head. I'm a bit suspicious of cribbing due to his thick throatlatch. Although his neck has correct attachment on both ends, it is not a third of his overall body length. Since it's on the short side, it will impede his balance when galloping and jumping.

His big, strong, well-constructed shoulder matches his big, strong,

well-constructed hindquarter. His front legs stand in good alignment with adequately-sized knees and fetlocks, but too much heel is creating a broken axis from the pastern through the hoof. Ideally, this angle should continue seamlessly. This fault adds undue stress to ligaments and bones in the hoof.

His topline is a bit weak over his loins, which can cause back soreness. I'd prefer his hind leg had a bit more length from stifle to hock so the hock is under the point of the buttock for maximum power.

In this group, he certainly gets top call.



The stance of this horse makes it difficult to evaluate her true balance as the front legs appear unnaturally placed rearward. However, the most obvious deficit is her short neck.

This mare's head is attractive in size and shape with a large, kind eye. Her head attaches cleanly to her neck, but the limited length of her neck restricts ease and fluidity of motion when galloping and jumping.

She has a long, sloping shoulder for good range of motion and well-defined withers. Her front legs show an ideal ratio of long

forearms to short cannon bones for a smooth, efficient stride.

It's hard to discern in the dark photo, but the fetlocks appear thick. Her back is a tad long and light over her loins, which, again, can lead to back soreness.

Her hindquarter is well-conformed with a uniform equilateral triangle (point of hip to point of buttock to point of stifle) for both balance and engine power. Additionally, her hind leg sits squarely underneath her for ideal distribution of concussion.

Overall, this is a nice, sporty mare with a few minor flaws.



Our third-place horse looks like several different horses pieced together. His overall outline lacks balance and symmetry.

His head is too large compared to his body and adds weight to his front end. His neck is his best feature with good length and shape and is the best of the three this month. However, it joins a very steep and upright shoulder that will limit his range of motion.

Although his front legs are in good alignment, the very low heel puts undue stress on tendons, ligaments and joints of the lower limb.

He has nice withers and a level back. He also possesses quite a

long torso, which raises concerns for back soreness as well as issues with collection, impulsion and lead changes. The weak coupling is followed by an atrophied topline over his hindquarters.

Also, his hind leg is quite sickle-hocked. This slung-under conformation limits range of motion behind and minimizes push-off power. This fault stresses the stifles and loads the hock joints, predisposing the horse to soft-tissue injury, bone and bog spavin, thoroughpin and curb.

This gelding may be a good soul, but his parts don't blend or add up as an athlete. ☘



2015 HOLIDAY SHOPPING GUIDE



• • • • •
WIN

A Dream Trip
Giveaway to Walt
Disney World®
Resort in Orlando, FL
see page 12A for details

• • • • •



Kensington Platinum SureFit
1680D Turnout Blanket
See our complete collection online at

www.HorseLoverZ.com/SANTAPH



FREE
GIFTS



GIFT IDEAS
from Breyers



GIFT IDEAS FOR EVERYONE



Noble Outfitters™ Ringside™ Pack

Durable 600-denier 100% Polyester Canvas fabric with water repellent finish and helmet compartment with ventilation panels.

COLOR: Black

SIZE: 18" x 12" x 6"

SALE \$89.99



FREE
STIRRUP WRAP
BRACELET

with Balance Riding Tight Purchase

*cannot be combined with any other offers



Noble Outfitters™ Lauren Quarter Zip Mock

90% polyester/ 10% Spandex stretch French terry. Opti-Dry Technology wicks moisture away. Features anti-microbial finish. Thumbholes at cuff, and reflective logo detailing.

COLOR: Wine Heather, Charcoal Heather, Periwinkle Heather, Black, Navy

SALE \$49.99



Noble Outfitters™ Balance Riding Tight

70% Supplex nylon / 24% Spandex Jersey. Opti-Dry Technology wicks moisture away. Features Toray Ultrasuede® knee patches, secure pocket at front thigh, hidden stash pocket inside back waist and lightweight stretch hem.

COLOR: Asphalt, Black, Elmwood,

Navy, Periwinkle

SIZES: XS - XL

SALE \$79.99



Noble Outfitters™
Men's & Women's
Cold Front MUDS® High.
100% waterproof, breathable
& moisture wicking. Shock-
absorbing, anti-microbial insole
to fight odors. Constructed with
5mm insulating neoprene and
fleece lining.

Women's

SIZES: 6-10, 11 (half sizes available)

COLOR: Black

SALE \$99.99

COLOR: Camo

SALE \$109.99

Men's

SIZES: 7, 8-12, 13
(half sizes available)

Noble Outfitters™ Peddies
Ultra thin calf with ankle shield for
padded protection at boot pinch
points. Lightweight and breathable
panel at top of foot. Opti-Dry
technology.

COLOR: Available in 25 colors
and designs.

SALE \$9.99





ARIAT

GET READY FOR WINTER RIDING



Ariat Ideal Down Jacket & Vest

Perfectly versatile for the cooler season and is cut to flatter the female figure. Not only is it filled with down insulation to keep you cozy, but it is also packable. It folds up to fit into an attached pouch, making it easy to transport.

VEST COLOR: Lagoon, Black, Chilli Pepper, Leopard

starting at **SALE \$79.95**

JACKET COLOR: Navy

SALE \$99.95



Ariat Extreme Zip H2O Insulated Paddock

Waterproof, full grain leather upper and waterproof membrane construction, combined with Thinsulate insulation to keep feet warm and dry.

COLOR: Black

YOUTH SIZES: 11-5

MEN'S SIZES: 7-13

WOMEN'S SIZES: 5.5-11

starting at **SALE \$129.95**



Ariat Women's Extreme H2O Insulated Tall Boot

Waterproof and insulated with Thinsulate insulation to keep feet warm and dry.

COLOR: Black **WOMEN'S SIZES:** 5.5-11

SALE \$239.95



Ariat Women's Extreme Lace H2O Insulated Paddock

Waterproof, full grain leather upper and waterproof membrane construction, combined with Thinsulate insulation to keep feet warm and dry.

COLOR: Black

WOMEN'S SIZES: 5.5-11

SALE \$169.95

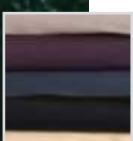
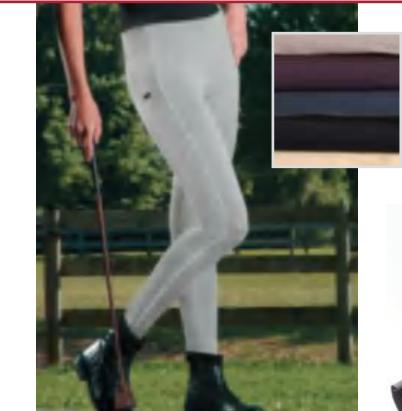


Devon-Aire Ladies Sensation Cell Phone Pocket Tight

COLOR: Graphite, Merlot, Dark Grey, Black, Beige

WOMEN'S SIZES: XS-XL

SALE \$49.95



Devon-Aire Signature Ladies Breeches

WOMEN'S SIZES: 26 - 36

FULLSEAT COLOR: Black/Grey, Charcoal/Black, Taupe/Taupe, White/Grey

SALE \$109.95

WOMEN'S SIZES: 24 - 36

KNEE PATCH COLOR: Charcoal/Black, Beige/Beige, Beige/Brown, Navy/Orange, Black/Red, Black/Aqua, Black/Purple, Navy/Aqua, Navy/White

SALE \$89.95

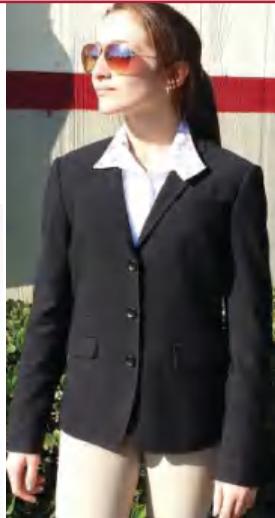


Devon-Aire Signature Granada Ladies Field Boot

COLOR: Black

SIZES: 37-42 Reg.& Slim

SALE \$399.95



Devon-Aire Signature Washable Water Repellent Ladies Coat

COLOR: Black or Navy **WOMEN'S SIZES:** 2 - 18

SALE \$119.95

ALL-IN-ONE

FUNCTION, FASHION & COMFORT



**Horze Crescendo
Carolina Padded Vest**
COLOR: Peacock Dark Blue, Midnight Green, Dark Brown
SIZES: XXS-XL
SALE \$79.95



**Horze Supreme Zoe
Women's Lightweight
Jacket**
COLOR: Lapis Lazuli Blue/Black, Teaberry Pink/Red, Black
SIZES: XXS-XL
SALE \$69.95



**Horze Supreme Andie
Functional Shirt**
COLOR: Lapis Lazuli Blue, Snow White, Teaberry Pink/Black, Light Green/Pewter Gray
SIZES: XXS-XL
SALE \$45.95



**B Vertigo Olivia Ladies
Full Seat Breeches**
COLOR: Dark Brown, Very Dark Blue, Bright White
SIZES: 20 - 32
SALE \$219.95



**Horze Grand Prix
Extend Breeches With
Leather Kneepatch**
COLOR: Black, Dark Blue, Fungi Brown, Khaki Light Brown, Steel Grey, Turkish Coffee, White.
SIZES: 22-34 Reg & Long
SALE \$112.95



**B Vertigo Kimberley
Women's Self Seat Breeches**
COLOR: Black
SIZES: 22-32
SALE \$229.95



Horze Supreme Avalanche Pro Winter Rug
1200D ripstop material with 300g lining.
Waterproof with taped seams, and breathable.
COLOR: Peacock Dark Blue or Black
SIZES: 63" - 84"
SALE \$169.95



Horze Harrison Bridle
COLOR: Light Brown
SIZES: X-Full, Full, Cob, Pony
SALE \$119.95





Tekna



MOUNTAIN HORSE



Pessoa



OVATION



Tekna Club Saddle

Developed for the dedicated rider on a budget. The latex/wool flocking eliminates lumps and bumps. Features the new QUIK-CHANGE Gullet System, changing the width of the tree is only four fasteners away!

COLOR: Brown or Black
SIZES: 14, 15, 16.5, 17, 17.5, 18

SALE \$355.50



Ovation Rhona Country Boot

German-made. Waterproof/breathable membrane. Oiled leather foot, top cuff, and accent strips offer beautiful contrast to the butter soft suede uppers.

COLOR: Brown
SIZES: 36R-45R & 36 W-42 W

SALE \$179.96



\$50 OFF

Mountain Horse Venezia Field Boot

Zip-in Convenience Meets Athletic Performance. Exclusive Mountain Horse Prolaze-Flexnotch technology for a comfortable heels down position. Full grain leather. Lining: Pigskin napa.

COLOR: Black
SIZES: Ladies 6-11 Slim, Slim Tall, Wide or Regular

SALE \$249.95



FREE

Pessoa AN Elite saddle Pad with Pessoa Turnout Patches

Pessoa 1200D Alpine Turnout Blanket
Waterproof-Breathable Turnout blanket features a 1200 Denier Teflon-coated Ballistic Weave outer shell, 300 gram insulation with a 3M moisture wicking quick dry lining. Patented Exceler closure system.

COLOR: Navy/Magenta, Navy/Hunter, Black/Clay Plaid, Navy/Black Plaid

SIZES: 60"-87"

SALE \$134.95



Ovation Palermo Saddle

Classic close contact saddle with added details for today's rider. Correct balance, proven fit, comfortable grippy covered leather with that "ready-to-ride" feel. Features the XCH Interchangeable Gullet System.

COLOR: Brown
SIZES: 15, 16, 16.5, 17, 17.5, 18 Medium Forward Flap
SIZES: 16.5, 17, 17.5, 18 Medium Flap

SALE \$1,255.50

50% OFF



Ovation Z-10 Soul Helmet

Make it your own with front and back engravable plates. Features leather brim and harness and adjustable dial-fit.

COLOR: Black or Brown
SIZES: S/M or M/LG

SALE \$69.98

Ovation Blizzard Original Boot

Water resistant, extremely durable, comfortable and warm fleece-lined synthetic canvas boot with wool & aluminum foil heat shield lined insole for added warmth

COLOR: Black SIZES: 31-43

SALE \$53.96



FREE

Pessoa AN Elite saddle Pad with Pessoa Turnout Patches



TROXEL

PERFORMANCE HEADGEAR

FREE



Winter White Vest With
Intrepid,
ES, Sierra or
Cheyenne
Helmet
Purchase



Troxel Intrepid
Low Profile Performance Helmet
COLOR: Black, Allure, Carbon,
Indigo, Chocolate
Sizes: S, M, L
SALE \$54.95



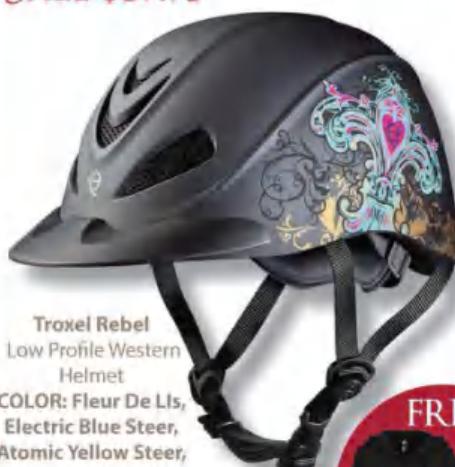
Troxel ES
Low Profile English
Performance Helmet,
COLOR: Black,
Bronze, Silver
Sizes: S, M, L
SALE \$89.95



Troxel Sierra
The Best-Selling Western
Helmet
COLOR: Brown, Black, Tan
Sizes: S, M, L
SALE \$99.95



Troxel Cheyenne
Most Advanced Pure Western
Helmet
COLOR: Brown
Sizes: S, M, L, XL
SALE \$129.95



Troxel Rebel
Low Profile Western
Helmet
COLOR: Fleur De Lis,
Electric Blue Steer,
Atomic Yellow Steer,
Turquoise Rose, Pink
Rose, Star, Rocker,
Cross
Sizes: S, M, L
SALE \$54.95



FREE

Winter
Vest
With
Rebel
Helmet
Purchase



Troxel Dakota
Maximum Vented All-Trails™
Helmet
COLOR: Trail Dust or
Grizzly Brown
Sizes: S, M, L
SALE \$54.95



Troxel Liberty
Low Profile Schooling
Helmet
COLOR: Ruby,
Pink Duratec, Gray
Duratec, Black
Duratec, Cobalt, Pearl,
Fuchsia, Black
Sizes: S, M, L
SALE \$44.95



FREE

Winter
Hat
With
Liberty
Helmet
Purchase

Top Quality. Great Value.
PERRI'S



FREE

Crop with
Half Chap
Purchase

Perri's Professional Half Chap
COLOR: Black or Brown
Sizes: Child's XS, S, M, L Reg. & Tall
SALE \$69.95
Sizes: Adult XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL
Reg. & Tall
SALE \$79.95



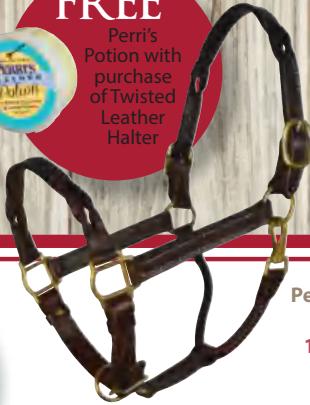
Perri's Padded
Leather Halters
**20 COLOR
COMBINATIONS!**
Sizes: Oversize,
Horse, Cob
SALE \$99.95



Perri's Real Tree Saddle Pad
COLOR: Green or Pastel Pink
Sizes: All Purpose, Pony
SALE \$39.95
Sizes: Dressage
SALE \$49.95

FREE

Perri's
Potion with
purchase
of Twisted
Leather
Halter



Perri's 1/2" Neon Cotton Lead
With Snap - 6'
10 COLOR COMBINATIONS!
SALE \$7.95

FREE

Cotton Lead
Rope with
purchase
of Ribbon
Halter



Perri's Ribbon Safety Halter
10 COLOR COMBINATIONS!
Sizes: Horse, Cob, Pony, Mini A, Mini B
SALE \$35.95

FREE

Perri's
Potion with
purchase
of Leather
Stable
Halter

Perri's Leather
Stable Halter
COLOR: Havana
Sizes: Horse, Cob
SALE \$69.95



FREE

Lycra Tail
Bag with
Lycra Mane
Hood
Purchase



Perri's Lycra Mane Hood
COLOR: Black, Hunter Green, Hot Pink, Lime
Green, Navy, Purple, Royal Blue, Turquoise
Sizes: M, L, XL
SALE \$49.95

FREE

Perri's
Potion with
purchase
of Leather
Stable
Halter



Perri's Padded
Leather Dog Collars
26 COLOR COMBINATIONS!
Sizes: XS
SALE \$19.95
Sizes: S, M, L, XL
SALE \$27.95



FREE

Realtree Fly
Bonnet with
Realtree Saddle
Pad purchase



Perri's Real Tree Fly Bonnet
COLOR: Green or Pastel Pink
Sizes: One Size
SALE \$11.95

MATCHING COLLECTIONS

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Lettia Collection Backpack

Stay organized and carry everything you need. Velcro loops keep your crop secure and an outside pocket for helmet storage. Side pockets carry all your small essentials.

Adjustable shoulder straps.

COLOR: Black

SALE \$71.99



Fluer des Lis Silicone All-Purpose Pad

Super fun Fluer des Lis design. Silicone provides a highly shock absorbing layer and keeps your saddle in place.

SALE \$59.99



Check out the NEW Argyle and Union Jack Collections. Plus over 35 other Collections from Lettia online, including CoolMax Ice, Leopard, Original Baker, Peace Signs, Penguin, Sparkle, Tartan Baker, Ying Yang and more...

Lettia Argyle All Purpose Pad

SALE \$44.99

Lettia Argyle Polo Wraps

SIZE: 9' long x 5" wide

SALE \$26.99

Lettia Argyle Baby Pad

SALE \$22.49



ARGYLE COLLECTION COLORS

Scottish inspired, argyle patterns retain their sophisticated, iconic style. For the preppy chic, available in 4 color combinations.

Teal, White & Blue, Pink & Green, Purple & Green



Lettia Hexcomb Pads

All purpose English saddle pads with hexagon shaped quilting and extra stitched saddle area.

All Purpose

COLOR: White or Black

Dressage

COLOR: White

SALE \$80.99



Union Jack Collection

The ever popular Union Jack flag modernized! The Union Jack flag is flown above Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and Sandringham when

The Queen is not in residence.

Lettia Union Jack All Purpose Pad

SALE \$49.49

Lettia Union Jack Bamboo Boot Sock

SIZE: Adult or Child

SALE \$9.89

Lettia Union Jack Nylon/Spandex Boot Sock

SALE \$10.79

Back on Track®Because comfort
makes a difference**Back On Track Mesh Sheet**

Therapeutic sheet is a breathable mesh material with state-of-the-art fabric containing polyester thread embedded with a fine ceramic powder. Designed to reflect the horse's own body-warmth, it creates a soothing far infrared thermal warmth, which can help alleviate pain associated with inflamed muscles and joints.

COLOR: Black**SIZES:** 60 - 90**SALE \$269****Back On Track Exercise Sheet**

Excellent for use during warm-up sessions, riding tours as well as following exercise / competition sessions.

COLOR: Black **SIZES:** 72 - 84**SALE \$139****Back On Track Fleece Blanket**

Made with a beautiful fleece material infused with state-of-the-art fine ceramic powder that is designed to reflect the horse's own body-warmth, creating a soothing far infrared thermal warmth, which can help alleviate pain associated with inflamed muscles and joints.

COLOR: Black **SIZES:** 66 - 90**SALE \$259****Back On Track Gloves**

Arthritis in the hand? Maybe this is your answer! They have helped many people with pain in their hands (such as rheumatoid arthritis), as well as sufferers of extremely poor circulation in their fingers.

COLOR: Black **SIZES:** XS, S, M, L, XL**SALE \$30**

FREE GIFTS

FOR YOU AND YOUR HORSE

FREE

Saddle Pad with purchase of any Back on Track Sheet

**Back On Track Regular Dog Blanket**

Provides natural warmth therapy with its polyester exterior. Helps increases blood circulation and reduces inflammation. Ideal for both prevention and injury recovery.

COLOR: Black **SIZES:** XS - L**starting at SALE \$79****Back On Track Quick Wraps**

A great leg wrap for everyone. Quick and safe to use, especially for those less experienced in wrapping legs. This Therapeutic horse

leg wrap has a shell of neoprene with a pillow wrap inside and Velcro closures.

Sold in Pairs.

COLOR: Black**SIZES:** 10, 12, 14, 16**SALE \$93****FREE**

Human Fleece Blanket with Mattress Pad Purchase

**Back On Track Mattress Overlay**

If you want a great night's sleep, this could be your answer! The mattress overlay is quite useful when you have a general body ache or back pain, or just want to sleep better.

COLOR: White **SIZES:** Twin, Full, Queen, King**starting at SALE \$129**

Check out the complete Holiday Shopping Guide at HorseLoverZ.com/SANTAPH 9A



TECHNOLOGY & COMFORT

QUALITY HORSE CLOTHING

Designed specifically for all
Shires blankets



SHIRES STORMCHEETA TURNOUTS
SIZES 69"- 87"

200G - COLOR: Navy or Poppy Red
SALE \$188.99

400G - COLOR: Navy or Poppy Red
SALE \$206.99

200G NECK COVER - COLOR: Navy or Poppy Red SIZES: S, M, L
SALE \$62.99

400G COMBO - COLOR: Navy or Poppy Red
SALE \$242.99



SHIRES TEMPEST ORIGINAL TURNOUTS

100G - COLOR: Black/Gold
SIZES 48"- 84"

SALE \$71.99

100G COMBO - COLOR: Black/Gold
SIZES 48"- 84"

SALE \$89.99

LITE NO FILL - COLOR: Petrol/Turquoise
SIZES 48"- 87"

SALE \$71.99



SHIRES STORMBREAKER PLUS TURNOUTS
SIZES 69"- 87"

220G HIGH NECK - COLOR: Navy/Turquoise
SALE \$152.99

220G - COLOR: Navy/Turquoise
SALE \$143.99

220G NECK COVER - COLOR: Navy/Turquoise SIZES: S, M, L
SALE \$53.99

LITE NO FILL - COLOR: Navy/Turquoise
SALE \$134.99



SHIRES BROADWAY LONG LEATHER BOOTS

These super smart long leather boots make the ideal country to town winter footwear. Inner leg gussets ensure these boots remain waterproof and wicking fabric linings help the boots to breathe and feel comfortable.

COLOR: BROWN

SIZES: 3-12 REG, WIDE OR XTRA WIDE
SALE \$242.99



SHIRES DELUXE HAYNET

Extra strong haynet featuring metal rings at the bottom and around the top enabling easy filling and tying. Mesh features 2" holes to reduce wastage.

COLORS: Navy/Blue, Navy/Red, Pink/Blue,

Purple/Pink

SALE \$11.69



SHIRES HIGHLANDER TURNOUTS

SIZES 48"- 87"

200G - COLOR: Navy/Burgundy/Tan Check
SALE \$125.99

200G NECK COVER - COLOR: Navy/Burgundy/Tan Check SIZES: S, M, L

SALE \$41.39

LITE NO FILL - COLOR: Jockey Print or Petrol Two-Tone
SALE \$104.39

RAMBO®
BY HORSEWARE

30
HORSEWARE®
IRELAND

RHINO®
BY HORSEWARE

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS



Rambo Duo Turnout Blanket
Waterproof and breathable 1000D ballistic nylon. Anti-static & anti-bacterial lining. Comes with 100g outer, detachable 100g hood and removable 300g liner. Features Leg arches, wipe clean tail cord, and reflective strips

COLOR: Chocolate/Cream or Navy/Sky Blue/Brown

SIZES: 60" - 87"

SALE \$435



Rambo Original Turnout Blanket
Waterproof and breathable 1000D ballistic nylon. Anti-static & anti-bacterial lining. Classic original cut with classic double front closures and cross surcings

SIZES: 60" - 87"

LITE - No Fill - Green/Red

SALE \$219

MED - 200g Fill - Navy/Red

SALE \$239

HEAVY - 400g Fill - Green/Red

SALE \$249



Rambo Supreme Turnout Blanket w/ Varilayer
Waterproof and breathable 1000D ballistic nylon. Anti-static & anti-bacterial lining. Layered fill for more warmth, with less weight. Features Leg arches, wipe clean tail cord, and reflective strips

SIZES: 66" - 87"

MEDIUM - 250g Fill - Black/Silver

SALE \$410

HEAVY - 450g Fill - Black/Red

SALE \$435



Rhino Wug 200g Medium Weight Turnout Blanket

1000 Denier Ripstop polypropylene with waterproof and breathable layer. V-Front Closure. Leg arches and cross surcings.

SIZES: 66" - 87"

COLOR: Chocolate/Cream Check/Chocolate

SALE \$209



Rambo Ionic Stable Sheet

Tourmaline lining releases Negative Ions, which increases blood flow and brings increased levels of oxygen to the muscles. Also helps to clear toxins from the body.

COLOR: Black/Black & Orange Stripe

SIZES: 66" - 87"

SALE \$230

(matching stable boots available)



Rhino Original Turnout Blanket

1000D polypropylene. Waterproof & breathable. Classic front closure, leg arches and cross surcings.

SIZES: 66" - 87"

LITE - No Fill - Navy /Light Blue Check/Navy/Light Blue

SALE \$179

MED - 200g Fill - Navy / Light Blue Check/Navy

HEAVY - 300g Fill- Navy/Light Blue Check/Navy/Light Blue

SALE \$199

SALE \$229

* Check out the complete Holiday Shopping Guide at HorseLoverZ.com/SANTAPH

ENTER TO WIN!

A Dream Trip Giveaway to Walt Disney World® Resort in Orlando, FL



"Come visit the Tri-Circle-D Ranch in Disney's Fort Wilderness®"
- HorseLoverZ Fan



Photograph of Walt Disney World® Resort in Orlando, FL provided by a HorseLoverZ Fan.



"Enjoy a trail ride with family and friends"
- HorseLoverZ Fan

To Enter, visit our website at
www.HorseLoverZ.com/sweeps

Every Horse Person's Dream Trip to Walt Disney World® Resorts in Orlando, FL! All expense paid vacation for two includes a behind the scenes tour of the stables at Tri-Circle-D Ranch, trail ride at Disney's Fort Wilderness®, horse drawn carriage rides, and a day in Ocala, FL for some more serious horse fun. Package includes all necessary tickets, accommodations, airfare, airport transfers and more! (Tri-Circle-D Ranch photographs were provided by HorseLoverZ fans while at Disney's Fort Wilderness®)

Enter the HorseLoverZ Dream Trip Giveaway to Walt Disney World® Resort in Orlando, FL. Do you love horses? Do you love Walt Disney World®? HorseLoverZ.com has combined both for the ultimate horse lover's vacation. For Official Sweepstakes Rules please go to www.HorseLoverZ.com/sweeps. No purchase necessary. Purchase does not increase chances of winning.

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HOLIDAY
SAVINGS COUNTDOWN



www.HorseLoverZ.com/SANTA

Genius at Work

Today's classic lower-leg position and the way we ride over fences have evolved from something quite different.

Italian cavalry officer Federico Caprilli (1868–1907) did not set out to revolutionize horse sports. His goal was to make cavalry more efficient. Warfare was still conducted on horseback at the turn of the 20th century, and the cavalries of the world needed a system of riding that was both efficient and easy to teach to large numbers of recruits. Before Caprilli came along, cavalrymen rode with straight legs and leaned backward when their horses jumped. Caprilli developed a new system, one where

the rider allowed the horse to use his head and neck for balance.

Although we now recognize his genius, at the time Caprilli was regarded as merely an upstart junior officer with radical notions about how men should ride horses.



Caprilli's main idea was that horses could carry the weight of soldiers more efficiently when that weight was over their shoulders rather than their back.

His main idea was that horses could carry the weight of soldiers more efficiently when that weight was over their shoulders, rather than their back. His student and



COURTESY, NATIONAL SPORTING LIBRARY & MUSEUM

Federico Caprilli was more interested in horses than he was in the people who rode them. His few written remarks are more about the horse's natural galloping and jumping action than they are about how riders should conform to those motions. Reduced to ultimate simplicity, Caprilli's system consisted of staying out of the horse's way. In this photo, probably taken around 1900, you can see his principles being put to a pragmatic test, jumping a tall vertical fence line with the reins in one hand.

His poise in the saddle is a result of his lower-leg position. It is difficult to see in this photo, but you can rest assured that Caprilli's foot is all the way into the stirrup and his heel is down. The slight displacement of his lower leg is more because the saddle design of the era has not caught up with Caprilli's revolutionary change in the rider's position. Photos taken just a few years after this one show much more forward saddle flaps to allow for the rider's shorter stirrups.



Bill Steinkraus, show-jumping gold medalist at the 1968 Olympic Games, gives us an insight into the reasons for his success. When you have a solid lower-leg position, you have a stable platform from which you can apply your aids with precision. When you don't have to worry about losing your balance in the air, you can concentrate on following your horse's mouth. Bill taught me that when you want your horse to lower his head and neck in the air, you raise your hand slightly. When you want your horse to jump at a fence more, as we do sometimes going cross country, then you drop your hand slightly. But don't try these variations until you have a good lower-leg position.

amanuensis, Piero Santini, remarked that Caprilli's methods were not aimed at riding for sport but rather "as a means of getting cavalry across country with the least possible strain on both men and horses."

Italian generals of that period were no better than any others when it came to dealing with innovation, so for a time Caprilli was transferred from the Italian Cavalry School at Pinerolo to a post in southern Italy. (Apparently, southern Italy was the Italian version of Siberia at the time.)

Some biographers have suggested that Caprilli was transferred because in addi-

tion to his affinity for horses, he had an affinity for young high-society ladies. While we will never know if this is true, it would



As we have all noticed at some point in our learning curves, riders who are natural geniuses in the saddle rarely make good instructors.

certainly not surprise us. At any rate, in 1904 his genius was finally officially recognized, and he spent his few remaining years as the chief instructor at Pinerolo,

the national training center for the Italian cavalry. While riding in 1907, Caprilli suddenly lost consciousness, fell from his horse and struck his head. His death cost the horse world a true genius, but his legacy has transformed horse sports.

Caprilli, like many good horsemen, was not especially verbal. He left only a series of notes that were eventually collected into *The Caprilli Papers*, edited by Santini and published by J.A. Allen and Co. in 1967. In his writings, Caprilli was far more interested in the natural balance of the horse than he was in the mechanics by which a rider could allow a horse to find that natural balance. As we have all noticed at some point in our learning curves, riders who are natural geniuses in the saddle rarely make good instructors—because they do the right thing instinctively, they are not good at explaining their actions.

The description of his methods was

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Beezie Madden, here at the 2015 Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Final in Las Vegas with Simon, has one of the best lower-leg positions in the world today. Plus, she is one of the most successful riders in the world today—see the connection between position and results yet? Stirrup leather vertical, heels down, toes out at a natural angle, 110-degree angle behind the knee over the top of the jump—those are the elements of a lower-leg position that can combine the stability of the Caprilli leg with the supple sophistication required by modern competition.



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left to his students, especially Santini, and to a Russian cavalry officer, Col. Paul Rodzianko. Rodzianko is an interesting character in his own right, having been a pupil of not only Caprilli but also of James Fillis, one of the foremost dressage riders and trainers of that era. Rodzianko's *Modern Horsemanship*, published in 1937, covered much the same ground as Santini had done in his 1931 *Riding Reflections*.

Shorter Stirrup Leathers

The success of Caprilli's system led to a heightened interest in its mechanics, specifically the position of the rider's lower leg. Caprilli's experiments with the position of the rider soon led him to the conclusion that in order for the rider to remain in balance with his horse, he would have to shorten his stirrup leathers. In his *Notes*, Caprilli states, "The right length of leather is therefore the first requisite of a secure seat." (Caprilli's emphasis)

As a result of Caprilli's influence, in the early 1900s riders began adjusting their stirrups much as we do today. It seems obvious now that shorter stirrup leathers, viewed as radical at the time, allowed the rider to maintain his weight above his horse's center of gravity with a corresponding improvement in the ability



The lower-leg position that developed due to Caprilli's influence was a very strong and secure position, but it was fixed rather than supple.

of the horse to go cross country easily. The new stability of the rider's lower leg also made it possible to develop a better upper-body position.

As radical as it was for its time, however, the lower leg of that period was very different from our modern position, and

I plan to examine that evolution. In brief, to achieve a lower-leg position thought to be conducive to galloping and jumping in the early 1900s, riders adjusted their stirrups so that they touched their anklebone when the foot was out of the stirrup and the leg was straight. Once the leathers had been adjusted, the rider placed his foot well into the stirrup. Caprilli stated that he wanted the "heel kept down with the foot well home in the iron ..." The term "home" means that the heel of the rider's boot is against the tread of the stirrup.

Remember, Caprilli was interested in getting men and horses safely across country, which meant security was a prime concern. The lower-leg position that developed due to his influence was a very strong and secure position, but it was fixed rather than supple. Caprilli did not view this as a defect because of his attitude toward what he referred to as "school" or dressage, as opposed to his own system

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I keep this photo in a file on my computer. The name of the file is THE Lower Leg, meaning that when I describe the rider's lower-leg position, it should look like this. Note the stirrups are metal, which means they are safer. The ball of the foot is on the tread of the stirrup, the little toe is against the outside branch of the stirrup and the heels are much lower than the toes. While the stirrup is diagonally placed across the rider's foot, the stirrup itself is perpendicular to the girth.

The spurs are adjusted correctly with the spur alongside and parallel to the heel box of the boot. As another safety detail, the buckle of the strap is centered above the ankle. This lessens the risk that the buckle of the spur will hang on the stirrup when the rider is in the process of falling off. I only ever had to see that happen once to become a fanatic about how riders should wear their spurs.

of "natural" equitation. At one point in his *Notes*, he states that the rider's "calves and heels should never touch the horse except by the rider's deliberate desire." The contrast between Caprilli's system and present-day usage is stark because such a position is not suitable for more sophisticated communication between the rider



As competitive riding became more sophisticated, the lower-leg position underwent a gradual transformation beginning in the mid-1930s .

and his horse.

Caprilli and his students firmly believed that it was sufficient for the rider to be able to guide his horse with simple aids and that any further training was not just unnecessary—it was actually detrimental. Caprilli stated that, "*Manège* [by which he



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meant "school" or dressage) and cross-country equitation are, in my opinion, antagonistic: One excludes and destroys the other."

If one accepted the Italian system, then a lower leg that supplied stability was sufficient. However, as competitive riding became more sophisticated, the lower-leg



Under Chamberlin's influence, the foot was no longer home in the stirrup; instead, the stirrup rested beneath the arch of the rider's foot.

position underwent a gradual transformation beginning in the mid-1930s. At this time another genius on horseback stepped onto the world stage: Gen. Harry D. Chamberlin, the greatest theorist the U.S. has ever produced, began to move the stirrup farther forward.

The weight of the rider's foot is distributed equally across the tread of the stirrup. It is hard to tell from a photo, but I have the feeling that the rider has relaxed his ankles and that the stirrups are pushing the rider's toes up, not that the rider has forced his heels down. We should relax around the stirrup, not press against it.

Seen from the front, the rider's toes are outside his heels. The rider should keep the same angle with his foot to his horse's body as that with which he walks.

The stirrups fit this rider correctly and safely. The stirrups are about 5 inches above the arch of the foot, and there is about an inch from the big toe to the inside branch. Considering that my model for these two photos is my fellow *Practical Horseman* columnist and legendary horseman George Morris, we should not be surprised that every detail is correct.



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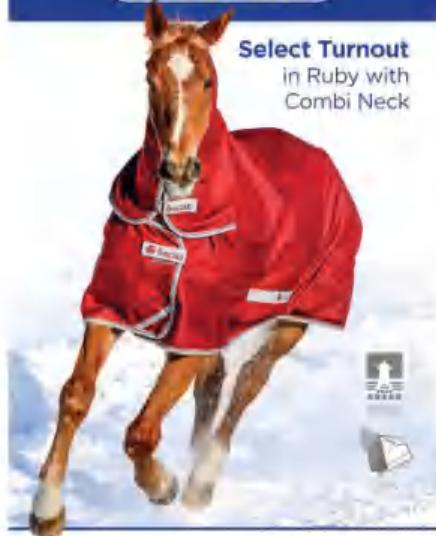


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A Suppler Leg

Under Chamberlin's influence, the foot was no longer home in the stirrup; instead, the stirrup rested beneath the arch of the rider's foot. Some textbooks of that period still require the foot to be home, but the photos of the same era show that the most successful riders have developed a more supple and sensitive lower leg, changing to a foot position that now brings the stirrup closer to the toes. The advantages gained in flexibility and communication by this small adjustment are obvious to the modern student.

In addition, Chamberlin began to bridge the gap between outdoor riding and high-school dressage. In his 1934 book, *Riding and Schooling Horses*, he states, "... a well-bred horse must know how to accept pressure on the bit ..." This quote illustrates that Chamberlin was moving beyond the Italian system

By 1956, U.S. Coach Bert de Némethy was meticulous about the placement of the foot in the stirrup.

and developing a program that incorporated simple dressage work into the overall training of the horse. Throughout his writings, he began to depart from the Italian theorists who maintained that the horse should be allowed the greatest possible freedom. Chamberlin's genius lies in his ability to promote the synthesis of dressage and cross-country riding. My earliest riding instruction was from students of Chamberlin. All of those men left me in no doubt that my horses must be obedient on the flat to be efficient over fences.

As horse sports became ever more competitive, the lower leg continued to evolve. Note, however, that while the details of the lower leg evolved, the stirrup leather has remained vertical for over a century. Caprilli and Chamberlin were geniuses, but they could not repeal the laws of physics.

By 1956, U.S. Show-Jumping Coach Bert de Némethy was meticulous about the placement of the foot in the stirrup despite the fact that it was not the same placement that earlier generations of riders would have been comfortable with. The increased competitive demands for control of the horse's speed and length of stride required a very supple, sophisticated lower-leg position. About this time the lower leg assumed the position we would recognize today: stirrup leathers adjusted to produce a 90-degree angle behind the rider's knee when the rider is seated, the ball of the foot on the tread of the stirrup, the little toe against the outside branch of the stirrup with the stirrup at right angles to the girth and the heels down. When seated, the rider maintains leg contact with the horse's body from above the knee to as far down as the conformation of the horse and rider will allow. With this contact, the rider has a wide range of leg aids at his disposal, from subtle pressure to insistent use of the heel and spur.

Does all of this sound familiar to you? I hope so, because this lower-leg position is the state of the art. ■

For more of Jim Wofford's advice and strategies on improving your eventing skills, find his books, *Cross Country with Jim Wofford* and *Modern Gymnastics: Systematic Training for Jumping Horses*, at www.equinetworkstore.com.

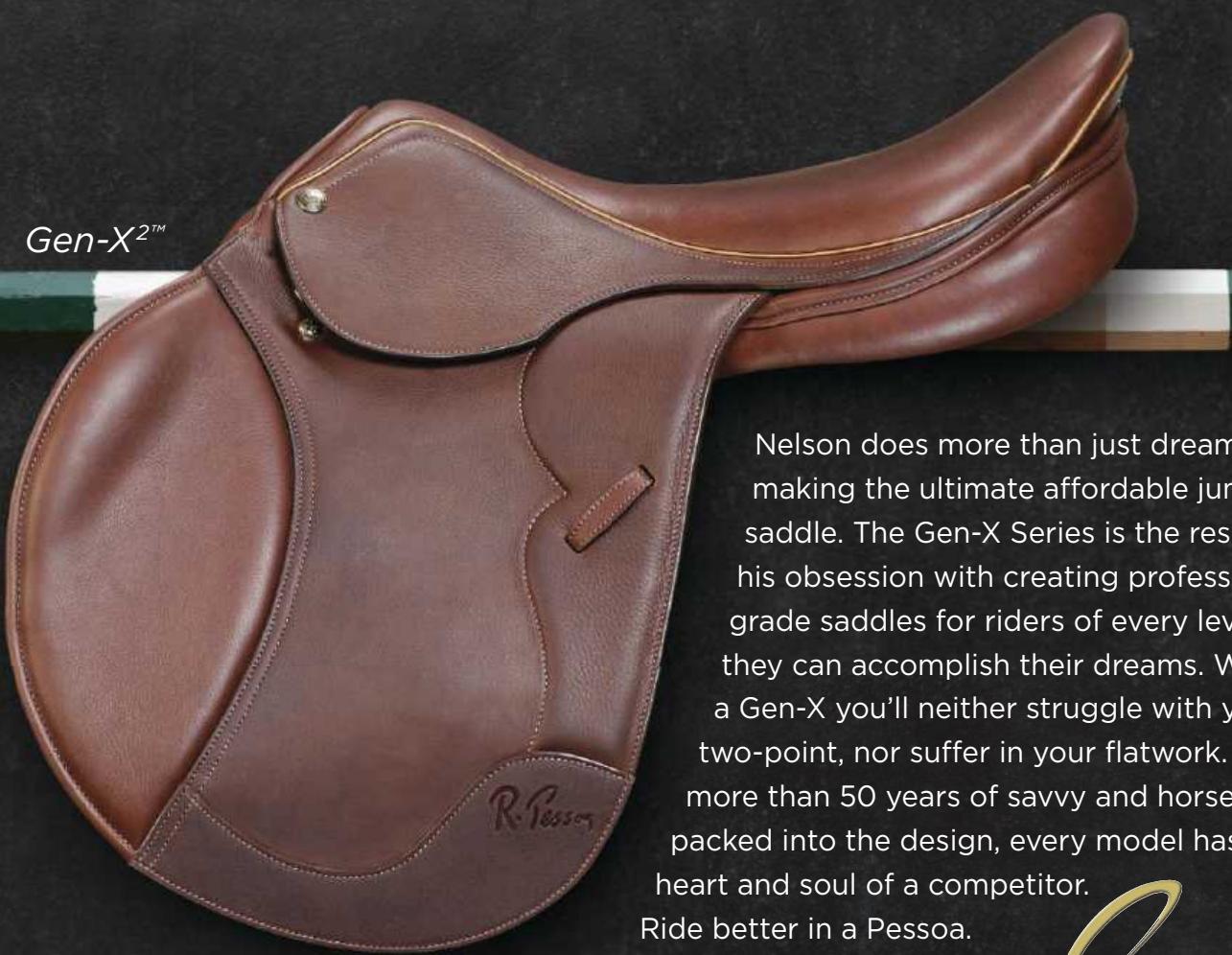


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Based at Fox Covert Farm, in Upperville, Virginia, Jim Wofford competed in three Olympic and two World Championships and won the U.S. National Championship five times. He is also a highly respected coach. He has had at least one student on every U.S. Olympic, World Championship and Pan Am Games team since 1978. For more on Jim, go to www.jimwofford.blogspot.com.

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Riders need to understand the two basic systems of schooling to avoid using conflicting aids.

By Bernie Traurig

Con my training video site *Equestriancouach.com*, there is a section called "Fundamentals of Flatwork"—a progressive Riding Simplified training system. This system is based on the principles of the American forward seat and forward riding system.



© TERRI MILLER

Today we have two systems existing side by side: riding in central balance that is based on the seat (dressage disciplines) and riding in forward balance that is based on the stirrup (jumping disciplines).

These basic fundamentals were first set forth by Federico Caprilli in the early 1900s and further refined in the middle of the last century by Col. Harry D. Chamberlin, Gordon Wright and Capt. Vladimir S. Littauer, whom I was fortunate enough to have trained with for five years during my Junior years.

In the days before Caprilli, there was only one basic system of schooling (manège schooling) and the word signified this. Today we have two systems existing side by side: riding in central balance that is based on the seat (dressage disciplines) and riding in forward balance that is based on the stirrup (jumping disciplines).

The difference between dressage and forward schooling is not so much about the movements the horse is required to execute as it is about the manner and balance in which he executes them. The goal

of riding in forward balance is to produce connected, ground-covering, efficient strides for an athletic sporthorse, enabling him to gallop, shorten, turn, stay connected and jump efficiently with agility. He must remain calm and alert.

Efficient schooling for any type of horse must be based on the type of balance at which he will be expected to perform. It makes sense that a rider needs to decide on the discipline and objectives desired of the horse and pursue them with the appropriate schooling system.

At the very beginning levels of dressage, the forward riding/training system is perfectly suitable. It's all about basic obedience of the horse without collection, and the starting levels of dressage are really no more than program rides.

Some jumpers at the advanced level may benefit from some exercises involving a degree of semicollection for short periods, especially the upper-level jumpers, but for the most part for horses who jump, the ideal is connected gaits in forward balance.

Confusing the Two Systems

I have been extremely fortunate to have studied and ridden with some of the great masters of the sport in many disciplines—Capt. Littauer with equitation, hunters and jumpers; eventing on the U.S. team with Stephan von Vischy; Bert

Additional Reading

I want to credit the following authors and their books for their help in writing this article:

- *Schooling and Riding the Sport Horse* by Paul D. Cronin, 2004
- *Common Sense Horsemanship* by V.S. Littauer, 1951
- *Hunter Seat Equitation* by George H. Morris, 1971
- *Progressive Dressage* by André Jousseaume, 1978



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Olympic, World and European Champions Charlotte Dujardin and Valegro demonstrate the advanced collection needed for piaffe. The foundation of this is on central balance, which is based on the rider's seat.

I am in a full-seat, which increases my leg strength and gives me more control of Laurus when needed. My balance and Laurus' is still an example of forward riding. Our positions are vastly different to those of the central balance of Charlotte and Valegro in the photo on the left.

de Némethy on the jumping team; Germany's Johann Hinnemann and Canada's Christilot Boylen while in the dressage trials for the World Championships and Olympic Games.

From this base of knowledge, I have encountered a disturbing trend in many of my clinics around the country: riders who have been integrating some currently popular and useful European

dressage methods originally designed for classical dressage and for its breeds into the schooling of American jumpers and hunters. This has led to a change in position that is based more on the seat than on the stirrup. Teachers and riders doing this are now wondering what happened to the quality of the American forward seat/hunter seat riding from the 1950s through the 1970s. They have confused

two systems with different objectives.

One specific area where I see this happening would be people riding young, uneducated horses with little or just basic education and applying advanced classical dressage aids. This confusion probably is the biggest misunderstanding that I encounter when teaching clinics.

As one of the great dressage masters, André Jousseau, states in his book, *Progressive Dressage*, "In order to speak in a clear language to a young horse, one must rigorously observe the principal 'hands without legs and legs without hands.'"

Common Rider Problems

In addition to seeing riders using conflicting aids or classical dressage aids on uneducated horses, I often encounter some of the following issues in clinics that riders need to be mindful of:

- Minimal horsemanship skills—as simple as proper adjustment of stirrups and girth
- Poor leg positions—too far back and lack of heel depth in general, especially in two-point
- Riders who are not perfecting and *utilizing* the half-seat position where it is applicable
- Horses behind the leg—unresponsive to light leg aids
- A lack of understanding of the controls of the horse—rein and leg aids
- Horses over-bridled—way too many sharp bits

Conflicting Aids

The result of this confusion has been the use of conflicting or clashing aids, where the rider makes opposite requests at the same time, such as pushing and pulling. Asking a horse to increase his pace and pulling in restraint at the same time only confuses him. Applying the leg too early or too much while slowing down often interferes with the hand and sends mixed signals, especially to young horses. I see this especially in downward transitions from the gallop.



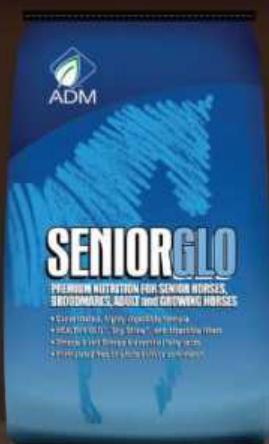
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Aids used in conflict with each other sometimes result from or are exacerbated by riders who are unstable in their lower-leg and heel positions: They pivot around their knees during downward transitions and inadvertently grip with their legs while trying to maintain security in the tack. Clashing aids can also stem from rider confusion or simply a lack of knowledge.

Only during collection or semicollection at an advanced stage of riding do the aids appear to clash, but collection is actually not the result of clashing but rather a sophisticated coordination of driving and restraining aids taught to the horse over a long period of time.

The years I spent in the dressage sport really gave me the insight and education that I find invaluable in applying the appropriate aids for the appropriate disciplines. This has helped me enormously in my clinics by quickly

identifying issues of clashing aids and confusion on the rider's part, the horse or both as well as being able to express myself in a clear and simple language.

It's the same with riding. Things really go amuck when an uneducated rider tries to use classical dressage aids with a young, uneducated horse. One must speak to the horse in a clear, simple language. Horses respond and understand so much easier with simple, nonclashing aids, so why complicate the issue?

Littauer always said, "People who practice dressage without knowledge of that system is like putting the razor in a child's hands."

To be certain, quality classical high-school dressage is an important educated type of riding, but it should not be confused with the flatwork, the position or the level of controls that are the aim of hunter, jumper and equitation riders. ■



Bernie Traurig has won more than 60 show-jumping grands prix and has represented the United States in international competition several times, including the World Championships. He competed in eight World Cup Finals and was the winner of the U.S. World Cup League four times.

A sought-after clinician around the world, Bernie launched EquestrianCoach.com in 2010. An educational online video resource, the subscriber-based website features training topics presented by Bernie and more than 60 coaches, including 21 Olympic and world class trainers and competitors.

One section is called "Fundamentals of Flatwork"—A Riding Simplified progressive training system. These videos present a Riding Simplified approach to develop and train horses for all jumping disciplines as well as for young and lower-level dressage horses. It discourages conflicting aids or clashing aids.

Designed to be easily understood and performed by the novice rider and sophisticated enough for the most skilled rider, the videos are created to present a visual means to train a green or uneducated horse to an advanced level and they are shown in basic, intermediate and advanced sections.

For more information on how to subscribe to the video site, go to www.Equestriancoach.com. To view a sample video, go to www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com.



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MUCH TO LOVE ABOUT IEA

Opportunities for middle- and high-school equestrian competition are growing in size and popularity.

By Kim F. Miller

eventeen-year-old Ransome Rombauer believes that her experience at Interscholastic Equestrian Association competitions was a big help in her recent victory at the U.S. Equestrian Federation Show Jumping Talent Search Finals—West. In the final round of that competition, the top four contenders ride a course first on their own horses, then three more times on each others' mounts.

In IEA jumping competition, middle- and high-school students ride unfamiliar horses and have minimal warm-up time. Though the IEA fences are 2-foot-6, compared to the Talent Search's 3-foot-11, Ransome says the IEA

LEFT: Riding Seacrest Show Stables' Narios, Ransome Rombauer of Sonoma Academy was the 2015 IEA National Finals Leading Rider.

RIGHT: She also captured the 2015 Platinum Performance USEF Talent Search Finals—West riding Lalone.

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Virginia's Chatham Hall Equestrian Team members show their IEA enthusiasm (from left): Olivia Deddens, Kaitlyn Shaw, Gabrielle Clauser, Mary Bradley Cassada and Emily Foster.

at the 2015 IEA National Championships last spring, is not alone in praising the impact of IEA participation. Riders, trainers, parents and sport advocates find much to love about the program that extends well beyond its influence on "Big Eq" success.

The first is affordability because horse ownership is not required to participate. The next is that the catch-riding nature of the competition rewards horsemanship over horsepower and the team aspect fosters camaraderie and cooperation. Plus, its similarities to collegiate equestrian competition make it a pipeline for continued participation in the sport.

The organization, which began in 2002, shares its affordability and accessibility mission and most of its format with the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association. One example is that competition hosts

catch-riding experience helped her to quickly assess each mount at the Talent Search Finals in September and compete with confidence.

The northern California rider, also the Leading Rider

provide horses and tack, and mounts are determined by random draw.

Membership, which is open to students in grades six through 12, has swelled steadily over the years. It passed the 12,000 mark this season and is projected to double in the next decade. The IEA consists of teams formed by private or public schools and those based at training barns with students from different schools and/or different barns.

The IEA has 10 zones across the country that conform to the U.S. Hunter/Jumper Association zones. Especially strong in the Northeast and increasingly along all parts of the Eastern Seaboard, participation in the organization can be contagious.

Virginia hunter/jumper trainer Beth Linton was inspired to start an IEA team after her daughter, Tayloe Clements, had a terrific experience as a member of the Rose Mount Farm team in Spotsylvania, Virginia.

After Tayloe went on to ride for the IHSA team at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia, Beth wanted her students at Woodpecker Farm in Woodford, Virginia, to have the IEA experience. The Woodpecker squad started in 2012 and earned its first Nationals berth this past spring. Member Bobbie Jo Adsit won the

Varsity Open Over Fences Individual Champion title in 2015 along with other top ribbons.

Beth hoped to keep the talented Bobbie Jo on the Woodpecker team, but she couldn't get too upset when Bobbie Jo's mother, nearby Virginia trainer Billie Jo Adsit, felt inspired to start her own IEA team this season.

That's just how things go once people get a taste of the IEA experience.

Steady Evolution

Emily David has been involved with the IEA since its inception. She began by coaching a team for the Grier School, a private boarding school in Tyrone, Pennsylvania, and is a past president and long-time board member. She is now administrator of IEA's biggest zone, Zone 2 (New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania) and co-coach of barn-based team Almost Famous Farm in State College, Pennsylvania.

Zone 2's growth exemplifies the IEA ideal. The horse industry is multifaceted and so is the composition of Zone 2's membership, Emily says. "I have teams representing high-end, fancy barns in the Bronx to teams in western Pennsylvania that are composed of riders from small, local barns and 4-H kids. I have a team in

upstate New York, where the majority of kids compete on the Arabian circuit, but they've put together an IEA team."

The Almost Famous team, which Emily coaches along with Lindsay Galloway, includes USEF Hunt Seat Medal and MacClay contenders as well as U.S. Pony Club riders. Some of the latter have no desire to participate in regular hunter/jumper shows but they want to be on an IEA team.

"We have really made the horse shows feel like everybody is welcome," Emily says. The density and diversity of equestrian activity throughout Zone 2 make for especially fertile ground for IEA growth. She believes its model will evolve in other parts of the country as IEA grows.

The influx of Pony Club and 4-H kids and their blending with A-circuit riders is increasing the enjoyment factor of the sport, Emily continues. "They are bringing more of a fun atmosphere to it and the big, successful teams are giving off the vibe that everybody can do this, which was the original vision of the IEA."

The appeal of being on a team with friends and/or schoolmates is another contributor to IEA growth. In the context of high-school sports, equestrian is a lone-wolf activity, usually creating separate sets of friends, school and horse-related, with little overlap. "In our zone, I'm starting to see more kids saying, 'I want to go ride with the team down the street because a lot of my school friends are on it,'" Emily says.

In the beginning, IEA teams were almost exclusively from private schools with their own horses and riding program. Today, the vast majority of IEA's 650 teams are based at training barns, raising the prospect that trainers/coaches might fear losing a client if a student were to switch teams. But many riders seem to be switching teams and creating their own teams to be with more of their school friends, Emily reports. "Trainers in our zone no longer seem to feel threatened by it."

In fact, Emily says many trainers have told her that IEA has increased their business. "I'm hearing more people say this is a way to get the people who can't afford the A-show circuit to do more in their barn,"

Additional Opportunities

The Interscholastic Equestrian Association is the fastest-growing middle- and high-school equestrian program, but it's not the only game in town.

In its fifth year, the **Athletic Equestrian League** (www.athletic-equestrian.com) includes riders from fourth through 12th grade. Dartmouth equestrian coach Sally Batton founded it with the idea "that students be judged against a set of standards rather than against each other."

In AEL competition, riders in a club each compete on the flat and over



COURTESY, ATHLETIC EQUESTRIAN LEAGUE

Riders from West Meadow Stables celebrate winning the 2015 AEL National Team Championship.

fences and are given numeric scores based on specific criteria. Over-fences classes are judged similarly to an equitation test. Points are earned for movements including a halt, change of direction and, at the upper levels, a hand gallop. Finally, there's an unmounted practical test. Flat and jumping rounds are worth 40 percent each and the practical test counts for 20 percent of the overall score. Riders compete on the show host's horses.

In addition to giving transparency to the judging, AEL scoring eliminates poor outcomes that can result when an overfull division is randomly divided. "Sometimes, just because of the way the sections worked out, you might get a winner who is the strongest of the weak," Sally explains. "Or another section might have all the top riders in it."

Emphasizing athleticism, the AEL does not require formal show attire. Riders wear team shirts and breeches with half chaps or boots.

Membership is approaching 200 riders, with teams throughout New Hampshire, Massachusetts and New York. This year, there are two new AEL teams in California at the Stanford Red Barn Equestrian Center in Palo Alto. Teams may compete in both AEL and IEA.



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she says. Occasional lessoners often step up the frequency to be competitive for their IEA team.

Westward Ho?

Out west, the IEA is just beginning to make inroads. Combined, Zones 8 (Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah) and 10 (California, Nevada and Hawaii) represent approximately 900 riders, compared to Zone 2's nearly 2,200. Zone 9, encompassing the Northwest, is currently not active.

Top southern California hunter/jumper trainer Jim Hagman was quick

ABOVE: The parade of teams at the 2015 IEA Hunt Seat National Finals in West Palm Beach, Florida

LEFT: Woodpecker Farm's Bobbie Jo Adsit won the Varsity Open Over Fences Individual Champion title riding Wall Street Farm Wellington's El Chorro.

or able to spend so much on the A-rated circuit. Plus, the nonriding time demands on those aspiring to top colleges has reduced hours spent at the barn for many.

"We were looking for ways to serve the needs of our clients and for programs to offer this new generation of parents," he explains. Elvenstar now hosts four IEA teams alongside its A-circuit training program, riding academy and U.S. Pony Clubs Riding Center.

Of IEA's appeal, Jim says, "You are not automatically the leader of the pack because you have the best horse. It's a team sport and it gives a kid with talent a chance to compete in a national championship without spending so much money. It's a perfect fit for our program."

The 2016 IEA National Championships will take place April 20–24 at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington with

to embrace the IEA concept at his Elvenstar program. He recognized it as "something I would have loved to do as a kid" and a good fit for the changing preferences of young riders and their families. In the recession's aftermath, Jim sees families less willing

a special periodic staging of both Hunt Seat and Western together. (The Western Championship is usually held in conjunction with the National Reining Horse Association Derby in Oklahoma City.)

The championships are special for participants riding at all levels. Elvenstar student Kayla Lott has won on the A-circuit's biggest stages and competed in four IEA Nationals. She likes the fact that "hard work shows in your ability to handle different horses and look good doing it" and that sportsmanship is a "huge deal" because "many people work their butts off to make sure everyone has a great experience."

The College Connection

IEA participation creates a direct pipeline to collegiate riding opportunities. "It's helped me a lot with college decisions," relays Bobbie Jo. "I had a bunch of college coaches talk to me at the Nationals and several offered me scholarships."

Even though the National Collegiate Equestrian Association's competition format is a little different than the IEA's, NCEA coaches have their eye on IEA riders, too. "The first thing IEA participation tells you is that they have a lot of experience riding different horses," says Boo Major, coach of the 2015 NCEA Varsity championship squad from the University of South Carolina. "You know you'll be able to say, 'Here's your horse. Off you

go! And they won't need 25 jumps to figure the horse out."

A rider like Ransome Rombauer with success at both the big equitation heights and in IEA competition is a "no brainer" hot prospect, Boo confirms. Beyond riding chops, the team experience of IEA is a "huge bonus," she adds. "The reality is that equestrian is an individual sport, so a lot of it is learning how to be part of and to compete as a team."

In collegiate competition, as in IEA, "sometimes you're riding and sometimes you're rooting. You need to be able to do both," says Boo, who has seen a significant increase in IEA teams throughout South Carolina at high schools and middle schools.

A Boon For the Sport

IEA co-founder Myron Leff says a doubling in membership size is forecast within the next decade, possibly within five years. Much of that will come from west of the Mississippi, he predicts, and the majority generated by word of mouth.

That's good news for the sport as a whole, says USEF Chief Marketing Officer Colby Connell. The IEA and other competitive programs serving high-school and middle-school riders help toward the federation's goal of getting and, equally important, keeping young riders participating actively in the sport. The USHJA concurs. It recently strengthened its partnership with the IEA by adding a scholastic membership category for IEA

members, giving them access to USHJA's education programs.

In the past, Colby observes, many riders quit when they hit high school because equestrian wasn't something they could do within the context of their school.

"That's changed a lot in the last 10 years," Colby says.

IEA and its counterparts don't make it any easier for public schools to take on the liability and logistical challenges of a varsity team, but they do enable students to pursue their sport on behalf of their school. "It's bridging that gap," Colby says. In many cases, participating students are getting recognition at school for their accomplishments, too. Space for trophies in gymnasium display cases and inclusion in

Collegiate Showcases

High-school athletes in mainstream sports face a mind-boggling array of chances to learn about college sports possibilities, including scholarships, and be seen by college coaches. Their equestrian counterparts are emerging as high-school activity blossoms.

The College Preparatory Invitational Horse Show (www.collegeprepinvitational.com) brought the showcase concept to the equestrian world in 2010. In January 2015, the Florida event drew 150 riders and representatives from 30 colleges. The Florida edition takes place Jan. 15–17, 2016, in West Palm Beach, and a West Coast edition debuts March 11–13, 2016, in Burbank, California.

Billed as an opportunity to discover and explore college options, the CPI invites riders to compete in collegiate-formatted competition—drawing an unfamiliar horse to compete over fences and on the flat in one of five equitation divisions—Novice (2-foot fences) to Advanced (3-foot fences). An educational fair includes various presentations and chances to speak directly with admissions officers and college coaches. Community service, fund-raising and scholarship opportunities are also part of the event.

The Junior Equestrian Festival (www.juniorequestriantfestival.com) debuted this fall as three days of competition, college-oriented presentations and general horsemanship clinics. Top hunter/jumper trainer Kip Rosenthal served as clinician, presenter and judge for the debut hunt-seat JEF competition, Oct. 9–11 in Fairfield, Connecticut.

An affiliate of the CPI, the IHSA and the USHJA, the JEF was created to "break the misconceptions about what it takes to ride in college," says founder Jane DaCosta. The format is similar to the CPI, with the addition of a horsemanship clinic. The regional nature makes it an affordable option for those who live in the area.

Jane hopes to bring the hunt-seat event to the Midwest next year, and there is a Western edition set in January in Weirsdale, Florida.

An IHSA rider herself and now coach of the Metropolitan Equestrian IEA team in Brooklyn, New York, and IEA Zone 4 chairman, Jane says a big part of JEF's mission is directing students' focus to college and to the opportunities for riding-related scholarships available at many of the IHSA's 425 member schools. "If these programs existed when I was in college, I'd have a lot less student loans than I did!"

IEA Fast Facts

- No need to own a horse to participate.
- Classes are offered in four ability levels: Beginner, Novice, Intermediate and Open. Any combination of ability levels on a team is permitted, but it is advantageous to have at least one rider in every class to be competitive.
- Riders in grades six through eight are eligible for middle-school teams while riders in grades nine through 12 compete at the high-school level.
- Points are tracked for individual riders and for overall team accomplishments. Individuals and teams earn points to qualify for regional, zone and national finals.
- Students ride horses that are furnished by the host barn and chosen by random draw. The use of personal tack is not allowed and limited schooling is permitted.

school sports announcements and yearbooks are a few examples.

On a related note, applications for a varsity letter through the USEF's High School Equestrian Athlete program have doubled to 4,200 in the last five years. The program allows students to track their time and accomplishments to earn the letter signifying a serious commitment to their sport.

Another contribution to the IEA's growth is the feasibility of putting together a team. The organization provides guidelines and support and, typically, parents are happy to help. The time commitment is significant notes Virginia trainer Beth Linton. "With the scheduling and paperwork, it's like having a second job." Getting ready to host Woodpecker Farm's first IEA show in the fall, Beth said it's worth it. "I really miss it throughout the summer, and I'm really excited about the IEA getting underway this season." ☀

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JUMP

Develop winning course-riding habits over ground poles.

By Cindy Ford ■ Photos by Amy K. Dragoo

One of my favorite exercises that we use frequently in the Skidmore College riding program is cantering over ground poles. This is a great way to work on course-riding skills without wearing out your horse's legs. It removes the stress and anxiety about "the jump" and teaches you to focus on what really matters: the ride between the fences and through the corners of the ring. By understanding these fundamentals and consistently executing them properly, you will set yourself up for competition success. This is particularly critical in intercollegiate competitions, where riders have so little time to get to know their mounts before going into the ring.

Ground poles teach both horses and riders how to relax and feel confident on course. Students come to our program from around the country (as well as internationally) with a variety of backgrounds and anxiety levels. Over ground poles, they learn to control the horse's straightness, balance and rhythm while maintaining correct position. With these skills, they can tackle courses with a more relaxed, "no big deal" attitude, even on strange horses. Ground poles also allow horses to chill out and tune in to their riders' aids.

Exercises over ground poles are also an excellent refresher for students returning to school after a summer of not riding as much or riding in programs with a different focus. They help to fix bad habits—for example, slowing down an upper body that closes too dramatically over the fences—and

reinforce good ones. Working over ground poles reminds riders to use the ends of the ring and stay in balance on the turns. It also helps them feel what is happening on course and react to their horses instinctively, so they can recover from little mistakes before they turn into disasters.

Later in the season, we use ground poles to refine skills even further and zero in on problems. For example, they teach riders to utilize the opening circle on a course for creating the correct canter and track to that elusive first jump.

Setting up a course of ground poles is much easier and more convenient than building a course of jumps. But *riding* over ground poles is *not* easy. When we jump, we can make a lot of mistakes and our horses usually still save us by going over the fences. But when we make mistakes over ground poles, our horses rarely help us out. They chip, break to trot, trip on the rails and so on. That's the magic of ground poles: They magnify riders' mistakes—so it's easier to identify what needs improvement.

In this article, I'll share some of my favorite ground-pole exercises. Remember as you set them up and canter through them, the goal is to reinforce good habits, not to

Riding over ground poles and very small jumps is a great way to polish your skills over fences. Here, Skidmore College senior Ursula Green is demonstrating excellent form on Tonic, or "Timmy," an 11-year-old Hungarian Warmblood. She rode a great track to arrive at this flower box straight and centered. In the air, she's already focusing her eyes on the ground pole ahead of her, ensuring that they'll land and continue to it on the correct track, while also maintaining the left lead. Timmy's workmanlike expression illustrates the confidence and "no big deal" attitude these exercises help to develop.

FREE JUMP SCHOOLING

Exercise 1: Single Ground Pole



You can see from Timmy's topline and his hind leg stepping underneath his body that his canter is very balanced. Ursula's lovely angles are keeping her in balance. Her reins are a proper length, enabling her to maintain a good connection. Timmy's perked ears indicate that he's focused. This is impressive because they are going down the long side where many tend to lose quality. For this exercise, Ursula should be a bit deeper.

catch your horse with tricks or surprises. Place all of the poles in locations that allow plenty of space for the approaches—so no tight jumper turns. Make distances between them long enough to avoid difficult striding questions—so no in-and-outs—and to enable your horse to add strides easily, when necessary. For the purpose of these exercises, make flying changes only in the corners, never over the poles.

We do these exercises with only well-broke, educated horses and with riders who are jumping at least 2 feet high. Keep in mind, the purpose is to create a confident rider to the jump. You cannot achieve this on a green or unruly horse. I also recommend practicing them with an instructor or ground person to give feedback on your position and canter quality.

Position and Track

From the beginning of every exercise, strive for the perfect position. Whenever in doubt, refer to the "bible" on this subject, George Morris' *Hunter Seat Equitation*. Here are a few other tips to keep in mind:

- Adjust your stirrups for riding on the flat so when you take your feet out of

the stirrups and hang your legs down, the irons hit just above your anklebones. Then place the stirrups on the balls of your feet.

- Stretch your lower legs down and around your horse's sides. Always think "long legs," enveloping your horse's sides.
- Stay connected to the horse and saddle with your lower legs and thighs at all times, even on hotter horses.

- For these exercises, sit down on your seat bones in the center of the saddle as you would for an equitation flat class, rather than in the half-seat you'd use for jumping. Still, think of your seat supporting your leg, not the other way around. Different horses require different amounts of seat, but they all jump much better if you ride more off your leg than your seat.

- Balance your upper body with the horse's motion, not in front or behind. It should be at the vertical or slightly ahead of it. If your hip angle is too closed, you will feel as if you're falling forward. If your upper body is behind the vertical, you're probably taking your leg off your horse and pumping too much with your seat. Ask yourself, "Do I feel off balance and vulnerable? Or do I feel secure?" Your

ground person can help you identify the latter, correct position.

- Adjust your rein length short enough to bring your elbows in front of your body, but not so short that they are straight and stiff. The most common rein mistake I see is too-long reins, which often turn into rough reins.

- Wrap your fingers around the reins and try to maintain a connection with your horse's mouth at all times.

From this solid position, you can apply appropriate aids to keep your horse's body straight with his hind legs working underneath his body and on your chosen track, never falling in or out on the turns. Place your inside leg at the girth with the stirrup leather perpendicular to the ground, asking him to be supple in his body and curve it around that leg. Keep your outside leg slightly behind the girth to keep his hind end from drifting out. Always think of riding all four "corners" of your horse (his right and left hind and front quarters) with both reins and legs. Use your eyes correctly, always looking where you intend to go. To work on this, practice riding to specific points around the arena.



3

In the last few strides before the pole, Ursula's excellent position keeps Timmy in balance and focused on the pole. She is sitting nicely on her seat bones—more connected to the saddle and deeper in her heels than in Photo 1—with exaggerating the motion in her hips. Her supporting outside leg is maintaining the right lead. Everything is organized and on track.



4

As a result, Timmy canters neatly over the pole. Even in the air, Ursula maintains the connection with her left rein and leg so he stays on the right lead. She has, however, lightened her seat a little too much. I would like to see her seat closer to the saddle so she doesn't accidentally encourage the horse to jump over the pole in the future.

Canter

When your horse's body is in proper balance, he can produce his best canter. Ideally, it should feel as if he has plenty of engine and yet is still polite. He should carry himself and not lean on your hands or try to run away with you. His canter should be smooth, consistent, rhythmical and easy to adjust. This is the canter that will get you to the jump with options—able to add or leave out a stride without risking a chip or awkward launch over the fence. Most mistakes occur because riders either don't find this canter at the beginning of the round or lose it midway and fail to recover it. A consistent, balanced canter is essential to producing a good round.

One good tool for finding the ideal canter is counting in time with your horse's strides. You can do this out loud during a lesson or to yourself in the show ring. This helps you to create a steady rhythm and pace so you can maintain the correct canter for the course that you are jumping. My students find it easier to keep the numbers low when they count: "One, two, three, four, one, two, ..." If you have to pause to make adjustments and re-

organize, start up the count again as soon as you can.

Learning to recognize the feel of a great canter takes a lot of practice. It is easier to do with some horses than others, and it can feel quite different from horse to horse. Some are more athletic than others. Some have bouncy canters while others are extremely comfortable. Fortunately, a horse does not have to be a great mover to have a great canter. He just has to be able to turn on his motor, balance his body and respond politely to your aids.

Once you find the best canter you can produce with your horse, try to create it every time you pick up the canter, whether you're at home or in the show ring.



5

After the first pole, Ursula canters all the way around the ring to the second pole on the opposite long side. She had to stay connected and maintain her good canter the whole way in order to meet this pole in the same nice balance. Achieving this consistency is harder than it sounds! I like her deeper heels and closer connection to the saddle over this pole. Her slightly closed hip angle is also allowing her upper body to stay with the motion, centered over the middle of the horse.

Throughout all of the following exercises, focus on your position, track and canter quality at all times. If anything goes not according to plan, fix the problem as soon as possible, then return your attention to these three essential factors.

Prior to working over poles, warm up

Exercise 2: A Line of Poles



Next, Ursula approaches a line of poles. She's found the same organized medium canter that she had in Exercise 1 and is looking through the turn toward the first pole. Timmy is bending around her inside leg in a nice, balanced frame.

This time, he takes a more athletic step over the pole—not quite a jump, but more elevated than his normal canter stride. Instead of stiffening in the saddle or falling behind the motion, Ursula just lightens her seat and hand a little. She's still in a good position, looking ahead to the next pole, which encourages Timmy to focus on it as well.

on the flat just as you would to prepare your horse for jumping. Then walk and trot over a single ground pole several times before moving on to the canter so your horse is absolutely comfortable with the idea. Give him—and yourself—every chance possible to succeed.

Exercise 1: One Thing (And Pole) at a Time

My first exercise is very simple: two single poles placed on opposite long sides of the arena, several feet off the rail and about 100 feet from the corners.

Always start with an opening circle, creating that balanced, organized, solid canter with a medium-length stride. (If you have too much canter, your horse might be tempted to jump the pole.) Canter at least one circle. If the canter still needs improvement, make another circle.

When you like the canter, proceed to the pole, using the end of the ring in your approach and riding your turns very precisely. Use your eyes through the final turn, looking at the center of the pole. This will help to prevent you from caving in on the circle or falling to the outside. As you canter out of the final turn, you should already be straight and on track to the pole.

Instead of worrying about the striding to it, focus on maintaining your lead, canter quality and straightness. Keep your connection to the saddle and your horse's mouth. Three or four strides away, elevate your eyes to a point beyond the pole and plan where you're going. Remain sitting over the pole, reminding yourself, "This is not a jump. It is a pole on the ground."

If you have a great canter, chances are your horse will meet the pole perfectly and canter neatly over it. If he chips or breaks to a trot, ask your ground person for input on what looked amiss in your position, track or canter. Did you not support him enough with your legs? Was your upper body ahead of or behind the motion? Is he falling in on the turns? Maybe you need more inside leg and outside rein. Try to identify the problem, then fix it in another circle before approaching the same pole again. Deal with one thing at a time. Eventually, you will get everything right and your horse will canter over the pole correctly every time.

If he jumps the pole instead, don't make a big move with your body. Soften your elbows and follow his motion as best you can. Then rebalance his canter and repeat the exercise until he realizes, "Oh, it's

just a pole," and canters quietly over it.

If he swaps leads over the pole, make a simple change afterward, then circle back to repeat the exercise. This time, check that you're using enough outside aids to keep him straight. To end repeated lead swapping, work more on a circle and less on straight lines. The number-one reason for lead swapping is a horse who is not around your inside leg and whose hind-quarters are not adequately supported by your outside leg. Never hesitate to circle after a pole to correct these mistakes.

Each time you canter over the pole, continue to ride straight ahead afterward, re-establishing your good canter and track before turning across the ring and returning to the same pole.

Once this single pole feels good, canter over it again, then make a circle and approach the pole on the other side of the arena. Ride it just the same way, maintaining your position, track and canter. If that goes well, canter the poles one after the other without making a circle in between.

Repeat the entire process in the other direction. Be aware that you may feel like you're on a new horse riding a new canter, which may be either better or worse depending on which lead he favors.



3



4

In between the poles, Timmy is tempted to lengthen his canter stride, so Ursula is applying a little more rein pressure to remind him to maintain the same, balanced canter. Having the correct length of rein makes this easy for her to do effectively. Meanwhile, her right leg is keeping his hindquarters in line so he holds the left lead while her eyes stay focused ahead to keep Timmy straight on the track.

By the time they reach the second pole, Ursula has restored the organized canter and nice shape in Timmy's topline. She's sitting closer to the saddle now, which encourages him to take a normal canter stride over the pole. The fact that he stayed on the left lead shows that she did a good job maintaining his balance and straightness.

Exercise 2: A Line Of Poles

Next, build a simple line of two poles about 72 feet apart, again placed far enough from the corners so you have plenty of space to practice maintaining your track and balanced canter in the approach and recovery.

Pick up the same great canter you had in Exercise 1 and begin counting out loud (or to yourself), still keeping your numbers low: "One, two, three, four, one, two . . ." Over the first pole, stay connected to your horse's sides with your seat and legs and to his mouth with your hands. Continue counting to the next pole to keep your canter consistent. Don't worry how many strides your horse takes—it may be six or seven. Focus more on maintaining his straightness, quality of canter and rhythm. If he's too strong down the line, go back to working over just one pole.

Just as before, be prepared to react to any mistakes. If your horse breaks to trot in the middle of the line, allow him to trot over the second pole. Then make a circle at the end of the ring, re-establish your canter, track and position and repeat the exercise. Use this opportunity to re-evaluate the effectiveness of your aids. Did you

Riding students have benefited from **Cindy Ford's** words of wisdom for more than 40 years. She rode and taught at Peter Van Gysling's Dutch Manor Stables in Guilderland, New York, for many years before becoming the director of riding at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York, in 1988. Two years later, she accepted the additional role of team coach. Since then, she has guided the Skidmore Thoroughbreds to six Intercollegiate Horse Show Association national team championship titles, bringing the team's total to seven IHSA national championships.

In addition to her Skidmore College students, Cindy also trains Juniors and Adult Amateurs and coaches them at U.S. Equestrian Federation-recognized shows year-round.

A big proponent of the sport as a whole and of horse shows in her region, Cindy was instrumental in creating the Skidmore College Saratoga Classic, a two-week A-rated horse show held every June since 1998. She is a trustee of the local Capital District Hunter/Jumper Council, which she helped to establish. In 2011, in recognition of her great contributions to the sport over the years, Cindy received the IHSA Lifetime Achievement Award.



take your leg away? Did you lighten your seat? Did your reins get too long?

If your horse repeatedly meets the second pole awkwardly, the distance isn't working. Ask your ground person to roll the poles a foot or two closer or farther

apart. The purpose of this exercise is not to test him but to build his and your confidence over a comfortable distance.

Once you're riding this line successfully, play with the striding. Try doing it in one less stride by riding with a little softer

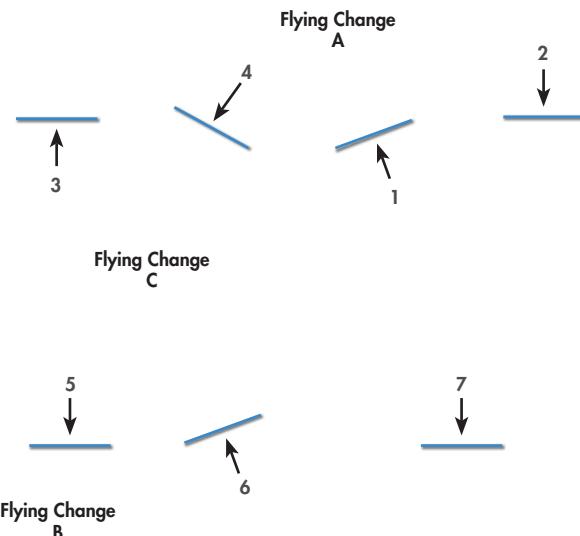
Exercise 3: A Course of Poles—Rollback



High-school senior Georgia Goodell is riding Warhol, or "Andy," a 12-year-old Dutch Warmblood. Georgia's done a good job organizing his canter, which helps her meet the first pole perfectly. The angles in her position are great, her rein length is good and her deep heels and connection to the saddle tell Andy to go over the pole in a normal canter stride. She is already looking ahead.

As she got to the end of the ring, Georgia looked back over her shoulder, focusing on the next pole before she initiated the turn. Here with her eye still focused on the second pole, she uses an opening rein to make the turn. Meanwhile, she supports Andy with both hands and legs, as well as her seat. This keeps him balanced and on the correct track to take them straight to the pole.

Ground-pole Course



Pick up the left lead and canter a large opening circle. Maintain the left lead over Pole 1. At the end of the arena, execute a flying change at A. Canter over Pole 2, maintaining the right lead across the arena to Pole 3. Canter Pole 4 without allowing your horse to swap to the left lead over the pole or down the broken line to Pole 5. Maintain the right lead over Pole 5 and ask for a flying change at B. Proceed over Pole 6, maintaining the left lead and execute a flying change at C. Roll back to Pole 7 on the right lead. Canter past the in-gate and return to a walk.

arm and, if necessary, a slightly stronger leg. Then try collecting a little to add a stride. This will make your horse more adjustable and you more confident about controlling the canter stride.

Exercise 3: A Course Of Poles

Now you're ready to try these skills on a course of poles. Have fun with your course design. Be sure to incorporate

any questions you might encounter in the show ring—bending lines, rollbacks, fences on the diagonal and so on. Look online for courses used at competitions in the past, such as an equitation final. Just replace any in-and-out with a single pole. I've also given a sample, basic course on this page.

When you ride these courses, always start with a good circle. Practice holding your lead on the lines—including bending lines—and make any necessary flying changes in the corners. If you're having trouble meeting the poles smoothly or balancing your horse in between them, try counting throughout the entire course. Anytime you feel things start to unravel, circle and get organized again.

Exercise 4: Incorporate "Speed Bumps" and Jumps

To begin practicing your new good habits over real fences, set up the same line of poles that you used in Exercise 2. This time, build the first pole into a small crossrail or vertical, about 1 foot high. Then canter to it, still sitting in the saddle, but staying somewhat looser in your arm and following your horse's motion a little



As a result, Andy arrives at the second pole in the same balanced canter. Georgia continues using her outside aids over the pole so he's not tempted to swap leads in the air or make an automatic lead change as they head back toward the rail. Instead, she insists that he maintain the right lead all the way to the rail ...

... where she then asks for a flying change to the left lead, turning her eyes to focus in the new direction. Everything else is still the same—her nice position in the saddle, her connection to the horse and his good balance and straightness.

Exercise 4: Incorporate “Speed Bumps”



In the approach to a small flower box, Georgia has made a nice, balanced turn. Andy is curving his body perfectly around her inside leg and they are both already focused on the jump. Georgia is somewhat looser in her arms and lighter in her seat, telling Andy that it's OK to jump the fence this time.

Because it's such a small jump, she is careful not to make a big move with her body. Her upper body is slow and calm and her hands are maintaining a connection to his mouth. Both are already focused on the ground pole ahead. After landing, Georgia will sit down in the saddle, reorganize and rebalance to create the same good, controlled canter that they had in Exercise 3.

more with your upper body.

Think of this jump as just a “speed bump.” Your horse’s effort over it shouldn’t create enough thrust to push you up and out of the saddle. Avoid any exaggerations in your rein release or position. Simply reward your horse with a slightly following upper body and arm.

After the jump, reorganize and canter to the pole. Then practice riding the line in the other direction.

In your regular jump schooling, throw a ground pole or two into your exercises and courses now and then. Many riders allow their canter and track to deteriorate after a few jumps. Adding a pole here and

there reinforces the necessity of balance and control. When you approach each pole, sit down in the saddle and focus on your position, canter and track. This is a great way to remind you and your horse to pay attention to what really matters—and to take a deep breath and remind yourselves, “We’ve got this!” ☘



SHOE FOR SOUNDNESS AND PERFORMANCE

Correct trimming and shoeing are essential parts of horse care. Understanding their core principles will help you identify a job well done.

By Stuart Muir, NZCEF, with Elaine Pascoe



Trimming and shoeing, done right and at the right time, help keep a horse sound and performing at his best. But what's "right," and how can you know if your farrier is shoeing your horse correctly?

Every horse is different, so what's best for one horse may not be so good for another. Still, the principles that guide the farrier are the same regardless of the horse's individual conformation or the work he does. In this article I'll explain the core principles and how they're applied in basic trimming and shoeing. I'll also tell you how to recognize and deal with some common problems related to this work.

Balance and Breakover

The guiding concept in trimming and shoeing should always be biomechanical efficiency.

Biomechanical efficiency simply means that, at any gait, the horse completes each stride with as little effort as possible. He wastes no energy, so he tires less easily. Efficient movement helps the horse be a better athlete.

Correct trimming and shoeing for one horse may spell disaster for another, so it's important to understand the core principles of farriery to recognize them in practice.



Balanced hooves land flat or slightly heel first (left), then leave the ground heel first and roll over with minimal resistance (right).

The way a horse's hooves are trimmed and shod influences the way they land and push off from the ground, and that affects biomechanical efficiency. For

the horse to work at his optimum level, his hooves must be balanced. That means they land flat (or slightly heel first) with the outside and inside portions of the hoof wall meeting the ground at the same time. They leave the ground heel first and roll over with minimal resistance.

The location of the breakover point—the last point of the foot (or shoe) to come off the ground—is a key factor. Breakover is most efficient when it occurs at or near the toe, and the right length of toe is important. Long toes delay breakover and act like levers on the foot, putting stress on the wall and on interior bones, tendons and ligaments. The farrier can influence both balance and breakover with 1) the trim and 2) the type of shoe and where it's placed on the hoof.

The Trim

Ideas about proper hoof balance have changed over the years and so have concepts about how to achieve it.

Hoof angles are a time-honored standard. Traditionally, a horse would be trimmed so that the angle of the dorsal (front) hoof wall, relative to the ground,

was 50 to 55 degrees in the front hooves and 55 to 57 degrees in the hind hooves. Few farriers follow this standard as closely today as in the past. The reason is that the hoof angle should ideally mirror the angle of the coffin bone inside the hoof. That can vary from horse to horse by up to 10 degrees, and without an X-ray it's practically impossible to know what it is.

Pastern alignment is another traditional standard. The farrier trims the hoof so the angle of the pastern matches the angle of the dorsal hoof wall. While this concept is still widely used worldwide, there are some downsides. The main one is the risk of removing too much wall or sole in the effort to make the angles match. The external hoof capsule is designed to limit concussion and protect the coffin bone and the soft tissues of the foot, and trimming away too much causes the horse discomfort. A horse needs strong hooves with good integrity to perform.

Center of balance is the key to a widely used system that was devised by farrier and educator David Duckett in the 1980s. Instead of focusing on the hoof wall, the farrier identifies a point on the sole that corresponds to the central balance point of the foot, which is directly below the center of the coffin joint. This is simply done by locating the widest part of the sole. An imaginary line drawn across the sole there will pass through the central balance point.

The farrier then measures to make sure

that in the trimmed hoof, the distance from the line to the toe is the same as the distance from the line to the heels. When there are equal amounts of hoof in front of and behind the line, the heels have the support they need and the toe is at the right length so it won't act like a lever on the internal structures. One of the great advantages of Duckett's system is that it provides a simple yardstick for determining the correct breakover point in any horse. Before this system was introduced, adjusting breakover was guesswork.

The farrier also trims the hoof wall for correct medial-lateral (side-to-side) balance, so that weight is distributed evenly across the coffin bone and other structures in the foot. Unless the horse has perfect conformation (which is rare), this doesn't mean that both sides of the hoof wall should be the same height. Many horses toe in a bit, for example, and that causes their hooves to meet the ground at an angle. If the walls are trimmed to the same height, they'll land unevenly—first the outside wall, then the inside—putting unnatural stress on the foot.

Instead, the hoof should be trimmed to ensure that the two sides meet the ground at the same time, even if this means the outside wall is a bit shorter than the inside wall. In fact, this is how the feet would wear naturally if the horse went unshod. For a horse to truly work efficiently, the hooves have to be trimmed in relation to his conformation.



LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT - SOPHIE

PURINA

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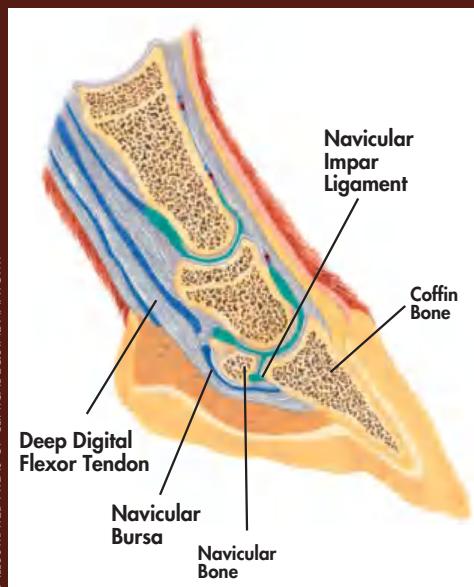
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attaches to the bottom of the coffin bone. Between the DDFT and the navicular bone is a fluid-filled sac, the navicular bursa.

- The digital cushion, a pad of fibrous tissue, sits under the heels and the frog. It's nestled between two broad wings of cartilage that run back from the coffin bone.

When the horse's weight comes down on his foot, all these structures work together. The DDFT helps support the joint while the navicular bursa protects the bone from pressure. The digital cushion flattens, pushing the cartilage wings out (and, at the same time, helping circulation by forcing blood up from the foot into veins in the leg). And because the hoof wall is thinner at the heels, it also expands a bit. Then, as weight comes off the foot, everything springs back into place.

■ The sole and frog are covered by thinner layers of horn. The frog is the most flexible part, with a consistency similar to hard rubber.

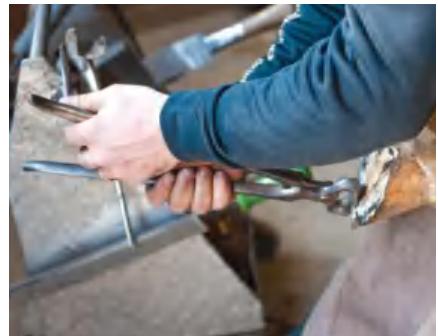
On the inside:

- The coffin joint is the core of the foot. Three bones meet here—the coffin bone, the small pastern bone above it and the navicular bone tucked at the back. Interlocking structures called laminae secure the hoof wall to the coffin bone.

■ The deep digital flexor tendon, which helps support and flex the leg, runs behind the coffin joint and attaches to the bottom of the coffin bone. Between the DDFT and the navicular bone is a fluid-filled sac, the navicular bursa.

- The digital cushion, a pad of fibrous tissue, sits under the heels and the frog. It's nestled between two broad wings of cartilage that run back from the coffin bone.

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Hooves should be trimmed according to each individual horse's conformation.

below the wall at the front of the hoof. From there the shoe will get slightly wider than the wall as it follows the contour of the hoof toward the heel, allowing space for the hoof to grow and for the heels to expand. A horse with low heels or weak hoof walls may benefit from more width in his shoes to give more support.

Placement and design. Shoes can be designed and placed to improve biomechanical efficiency. It's not always possible to trim a hoof to the ideal breakover point, for example. There may be limits to the amount of hoof that can be removed, or deformation of the hoof capsule may make it difficult to identify landmarks like the widest part of the sole. By using shoes with rolled or rocker toes or by setting the shoe back under the front of the hoof capsule, the farrier can move the breakover point back and reduce stress on the foot.

Nails. Nails should be placed only where hoof wall permits and in the front half of the hoof capsule, no farther back than the widest point of the hoof. In a nicely finished shoeing job, nails are clinched smoothly at the wall and line up parallel with the ground. Such details don't really affect function, but they're a sign of quality workmanship.

After the Farrier Leaves

When your horse has brand-new shoes, you don't expect to call your farrier until it's time for another new set. But keep that number in case these problems pop up:

Soreness: I like to think that if a horse is sound before he is shod, he should be sound after, too. If your horse is sore after

The Shoes

Shoes affect the health and efficient functioning of the foot, and they're an important part of the farrier's role in addressing hoof-capsule problems.

Fit. Shoes should give support to the entire wall, heel to heel, and should always be shaped to fit the horse's trimmed feet—feet should not be trimmed to fit shoes. Ideally, the toe of the shoe will sit directly

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ABOVE: Although small problems with hoof balance can be hard to spot, over time the imbalance will produce distortions in the hoof capsule, such as vertical cracks at the toe.

LEFT: Shoes should always be shaped to fit the horse's trimmed feet, not the other way around.

shoeing, contact your farrier immediately to identify the underlying issue. Pack the foot with an anti-inflammatory product until the farrier can get to the horse. The cause can be as simple as a hot nail—a nail placed a bit too close to the sensitive tissue in the foot. The farrier can pull the nail. A horse may also be sore if the farrier had to do a lot of corrective trimming.

Keeping the foot packed for a few days will generally reduce inflammation. But if the horse is routinely sore after shoeing or if soreness lasts longer than a couple of days, have your vet look at him. Whatever the problem is, the vet and the farrier should work together to solve it.

Lost shoes. Horses lose shoes for numerous reasons. Correctly applied shoes won't just fall off, but any horse can take a bad step and pull a shoe that way. Sometimes conformation plays a part; a horse with a short back and a long step is more likely to overstep and take off front shoes, for instance. The farrier can help by easing breakover in the front feet to help them get out of the way faster. Owners can help by using bell boots.

Controlled turnout will also help prevent lost shoes. If your horse grazes

with others, be sure that the group settles well together so there's minimal racing around. Paddocks with dry footing will increase your chances of keeping the shoes on, too. And be sure that your horse is trimmed and reshod frequently enough that his shoes don't become loose. Loose shoes can be dangerous even if they don't come off—a loose nail can damage the hoof wall or push into the sensitive tissues.

I always recommend that owners and trainers pack the hoof as soon as possible after the horse loses a shoe. Doing this will help stop the walls from breaking up and allow the farrier to put the shoe back on with little to no damage to the foot.

Trouble Signs

Small problems with hoof balance can be hard to spot as the horse moves, but over time imbalance produces distortions in the hoof capsule. You can see these changes if you stand your horse square and view the feet from all angles, then pick up each foot and examine from beneath. Look for:

- A flare or dish at the toe or on either side. The distorted area is under stress.
- Vertical cracks at the toe or at the quarters, wherever imbalance puts excess pres-

sure on the wall.

■ Compacted growth rings. Growth rings, the fine horizontal lines that run across the hoof wall, should be evenly spaced and parallel to the coronary band. When one part of the foot bears more weight than the rest, growth is slower and the rings will be closer together. (Prominent growth rings sometimes appear after illness or changes in diet or exercise.)

■ Sheared heels, a sign of medial-lateral imbalance. Both heels should be the same height. If one heel takes more weight than the other, it will be pushed up over time, a condition called sheared heels.

■ Underrun (collapsed) heels, which develop from long-toe, low-heel imbalance. Over time the heels gradually become so low that they're crushed forward, becoming part of the weight-bearing surface.

■ Contracted heels, which develop when the horse puts more weight than normal on his toes. Over time the foot takes on a boxy shape, the frog narrows and the heels grow tall and narrow.

■ A distorted sole or frog. The ideal sole is basically symmetrical with similar amounts of hoof on each side of a plump, healthy-looking frog. Excessive width to

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The more information you can provide to your farrier, the better he or she can adjust the shoeing.

Conformation is often the root of these problems. For example, suppose the horse toes in. If the hooves aren't trimmed to accommodate that conformation, they won't be balanced. Flares and other hoof-capsule distortions will develop, and joints, tendons and ligaments will be under unnatural stress. That can lead to unsoundness.

Unsoundness can also cause hoof-capsule distortions. The horse weights or places his foot differently to ease discomfort, and the hoof capsule responds by changing shape. Narrow, boxy feet and clubfeet (with tall heels and a nearly vertical wall at the toe) often have underlying issues, for example. Work with your veterinarian and the farrier to identify the cause. X-rays should be taken before any work is done.

one side of the frog or a narrow frog with a deep fissure at the base can signal imbalance. Thrush can also appear.

A horse's front feet (or hind feet) often don't match. One front hoof may be a bit flatter than the other or have a slightly different shape. Conformation or a soundness problem, rather than poor shoeing, may be a reason. A farrier may be able to force hooves to match or trim them to make a horse seem to stand or move straighter, but artificially changing the foot can be the quickest way to lameness.

You're In Charge

As the horse's owner, rider or trainer—or maybe all three—you know the horse best because you see him every day. You're also the person ultimately responsible for his well-being. It's up to you to keep him on a regular trimming and shoeing schedule.

Many adult horses need the farrier every five to eight weeks, but the interval between shoeings varies enormously. Keep an eye on your horse's hoof growth, and set up a schedule that gets the farrier to your barn before the shoes get loose or the feet out-

grow them. You can help ensure that the horse is shod to the best of your farrier's ability by providing safe working conditions and adequate lighting and by making sure the horse is settled before the farrier arrives.

Communication is the key to a successful relationship with your farrier. The more information you give him, the better he or she can adjust your horse's shoeing to suit his needs. Describe any lameness issues, changes in the horse's attitude to training or other concerns before the farrier starts working so adjustments can be made. If you have questions about the way the horse is shod, ask. A good farrier won't resent questions and should be able to give straightforward answers. ☐

Stuart Muir, NZCEF, CJF, APF, joined the podiatry team at Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky, in 2012. Before then, he practiced full time in his native New Zealand, shoeing some of the country's top eventers and racehorses.



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Help me stay on course!

Q

I constantly go off course in my dressage and jumping tests at events. How do I stay focused?

LAURA VANDERLIET

AThere are two main reasons for riders going off course in dressage or show jumping. First, you may not know your test as well as you think you do. You should be able to pick it up at any movement or jump and recite the rest of it easily. It's like knowing the alphabet so well that you can remember what comes after L without starting at the beginning. Second, you may forget your test because your horse does something that distracts you. You're so busy dealing with him that you blow right by the next letter or jump.

Both of these situations can be avoided with proper preparation and a thoughtful warm-up plan. Begin learning your dressage test months before the competition. At the beginning of each year, check for any new movements in the tests you plan to ride. Practice those until several weeks before the event, then put them together and ride the complete test. Run through it several times in the week leading up to the event. Some people worry that practicing dressage tests too frequently teaches horses to anticipate the movements. I've found that horses who tend to anticipate actually improve when you practice the tests even more. They know exactly what's coming next, so they're more relaxed.

Even if you've ridden a test many times, solidify it in your mind the week before your event with visualization. Find somewhere quiet to sit in a very relaxed state with your eyes closed. If you rush through the visualization, you'll rush when you ride the test. Instead, go through it in real time, imagining every moment. If the estimated time to perform your test is five minutes, it should take you five minutes to visualize it from beginning to end. Think of how you'll prepare for, ride and finish each movement, not just where you'll do it. For example, "I enter at A in a big, forward, balanced trot ... asking my horse to be light in the bridle and lift his shoulders ... then I take a deep breath, make a half-halt and ... three, two, one ... halt."

During your visualization, instead of picturing yourself riding the perfect test, imagine staying focused in spite of any possible distractions. I once had a horse who sneezed when he got nervous at shows. If I visualized myself keeping my cool no matter what he did, his sneezing wouldn't rattle me. Do the same with any habits your horse has. For example, if his haunches tend to drift sideways on the centerline, visualize yourself closing your right or left leg as necessary to keep him straight.



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The week before a competition, solidify the test in your mind with visualization, thinking of how you'll prepare for, ride and finish each movement.

Also try walking your dressage test on foot, just as you would a jumping course. This will help you to orient yourself in the arena. You can sometimes even do this in the competition arena the night before or morning of your event. If the organizers don't allow you to walk in the ring, sit behind A and visualize your test, this time with your eyes open, so you can mentally associate each movement with the surrounding visuals—the judge's booth or trailer, woods, cornfields or barns on either side of the ring, etc. When you visualize the test again later, just before your ride, you can incorporate that data into your inner dialog. For example, "I'll pick up my right-lead canter in the corner by the woods."

Effectively memorizing your show-jumping test is very similar, although you have much less time to do it. Everybody has a different ideal way of learning, so be sure to walk the course at least once by yourself. Create your own mental image of each jump, line and turn—along with all the surrounding visuals—without the influence of anyone else's thought process. Then make time to sit somewhere quiet to visualize your ride in real time. If the estimated



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ride time is two and a half minutes, take that much time to ride the course in your mind. Even if your time is limited, spend a few minutes on the side of the warm-up ring to do this while sitting on your horse.

During your visualization, focus not only on the individual jumps, but also on what you'll do in between them. How will you finish a jump and balance your horse for the next one? How will you make each turn, giving yourself enough room to get straight to the next fence? Just as you did with your dressage test, also prepare yourself to handle any possible distractions. Say your horse spooks or cuts a corner. Imagine yourself reacting smoothly and efficiently, fixing whatever the problem is while staying on track—or getting back on track—to the next fence.

Finally, both for dressage and show jumping, use your warm-up time wisely. In the last few minutes before your ride time, be careful not to add lots of clutter to your mind. Now is not the time to wander around the ring chatting with friends. Focus simply on your horse and the test at hand. If you've prepared properly, the test will go just as well as you imagined.

Advanced-level eventer Laura Vander Vliet has dedicated more than 20 years to producing confident, forward-thinking sport horses in many disciplines. After earning a business degree from Cornell University's Johnson Graduate School of Management, she became an assistant trainer for U.S. Equestrian Federation Young Horse Dressage Coach Scott Hassler. She then worked for Olympic eventer Phillip Dutton as his assistant trainer and barn manager before starting her own training business in 1998. Best known for her ability to start horses under saddle without having to "bronc them out," she has provided this service regularly to many trainers in different disciplines around the country, including two-time Breeders' Cup winner Michael Dickinson. Laura and her partner, Brazilian eventer Nilson Moreira da Silva, now run a train-

ing business, L & N Equestrian, together in Aiken, South Carolina.

Three steps to safe tying

Q

JAKE NODAR

A

When teaching horses of any age to tie, the most important goal is to minimize the risk of injury, which can result from fighting

the rope, pulling back forcefully against it or even slipping and falling. The best way to do this is by teaching your horse to react to pressure on the other end of the rope always by yielding—never resisting—no matter what the circumstances are. This makes the next step of being attached to an immovable object less surprising and upsetting for him. Even so, I still do not recommend beginning to teach foals to tie until they are at least 6 months old and fully weaned. Before then, however, you can build a good foundation in preparation for this lesson by halter-breaking your foal and teaching him the first step I describe below.

I take cross-ties even more seriously, as horses find them more frightening than a single tie and can injure themselves or others if they're not introduced to the concept properly. Don't teach your youngster to cross-tie until he is relatively mature (at least 2 years old) and extremely comfortable with being tied with a single rope.

Practice the following steps in short sessions, no more than 10 or 15 minutes each, several times a week.

Step 1: Yield to pressure

Teach your youngster to yield to pressure from the lead rope straight



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Once you progress to tying your young horse for short periods of time, have all of your grooming supplies and tack within reach so that you never have to leave him unattended while tied.

off the bat. Ask him to stand still, then walk around to face him, standing a few feet in front of him. Next, gently apply pressure to the lead rope. The moment he steps toward you—and toward the rope pressure—release the pressure and give him lots of praise and affection. Repeat this several times. Then do the same thing from either side, asking him to turn his body left or right and step in your direction. Ingrain in his head that he always reacts to pressure on the rope by moving *toward* it, not away from it.

Step 2: Simulate tying

When your horse has mastered Step 1, find a solid fence post in a roundpen or small paddock surrounded by level, dry ground. In this early stage of tying training, avoid any potentially slippery footing—mud, pavement, concrete, etc. Also check that the fence post is smooth enough that the rope won't snag on it. For this exercise, replace your regular lead rope with one that is 10 to 12 feet long.

Lead your youngster into the roundpen or paddock and close the gate to be sure he's safe in case you have to

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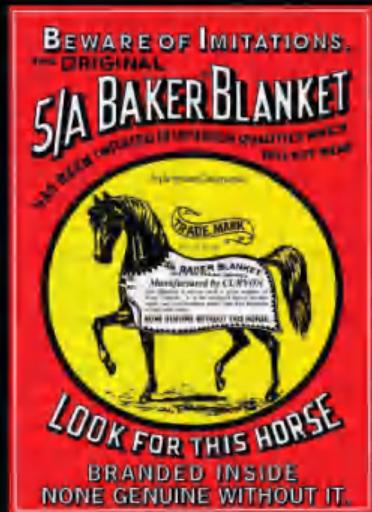
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let him go. Ask him to halt 2 to 3 feet away from the post, just as if you were going to tie him up. Loop the rope around the post at about his head level, but instead of tying it, hold the excess in your hand and step a few feet to one side. This way you'll be safely out of reach if he does anything unpredictable. It will also help him to disassociate you from the rope pressure. He needs to learn to respect and yield to whatever the rope is attached to in the same way he learned to yield to you.

To help him achieve this understanding, gently pull on the rope, applying pressure in the same way you did in Step 1. As soon as he steps toward the post, release the pressure and give him plenty of praise. Then ask him to back up a few steps and repeat the exercise. Always be sure he has a few feet of space between his nose and the post before applying the rope pressure so he feels like he has enough room to move forward. Also be careful never to let any part of the rope dangle down near his legs.

When he's responding consistently to this kind of pressure—which may take several sessions over a number of days—raise the emotion level slightly. Loop the rope around the same post and stand to the side again. This time, wave your hand in the air, just dramatically enough to startle him but not so wildly that he panics. Ideally, he should raise his head in mild alarm. When he does, hold steady pressure on the lead rope so that he can't back up. As soon as he relaxes and yields to the pressure on the rope by lowering his head or stepping toward the post, praise him.

Next, find ways to increase the emotion level gradually and test his response to pressure on the rope. How far you take this depends on how spooky your horse is. Waving a feed bag in front of most horses usually produces the right reaction, but you might need to get more creative than that if your horse is not easily startled. If you ever overdo it and scare your horse so

much that he pulls back violently, let go of the rope. Then start over at Step 1 to rebuild his confidence.

Step 3: Tie for short periods of time

Once your youngster has mastered Step 2, he's ready for short, supervised periods of tying. Do this in the same paddock or roundpen you used earlier or in his stall if there is a solid post or tie ring attached securely to the wall. (Never tie your horse to metal stall bars/dividers. They can pop free under force and cause serious injury.) Tie your horse with a quick-release knot and proceed with your normal grooming and tacking-up routine. Be ready to untie him quickly if anything upsets him enough to make him fight the rope.

Never leave him unattended at this point. Have all of your grooming supplies and tack within reach so that you don't have to walk down the barn aisle or disappear into the tack room.

For the next several weeks, keep these tying sessions short and stay close to him until he seems accustomed to the routine. Give him lots of love to show him that he's doing the right thing.

Cross-ties

Wait until your horse is absolutely reliable on a single tie before introducing him to cross-ties. For his first lessons, use cross-ties in a stall or grooming stall so that he's surrounded by walls on three sides. This will make him feel safer than putting him on cross-ties in an open barn aisle. Knot a short length of baling twine into a loop on the wall end of each cross-tie so that it will break under extreme pressure. Do not use flexible, bungee-like ties. These not only encourage horses to back up and lean on them, but they can snap dangerously if they come undone, posing serious risk to the horse and people around him.

The first time you cross-tie your horse, attach only one cross-tie to his halter. On the other side, attach your long lead rope and tie it to the wall ring



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on that side of the stall with a quick-release knot. Allow a few extra inches of slack in the rope so your horse feels a little more freedom to move his head. Then go about your normal grooming and tacking-up routine. As with the early single-tie lessons, don't leave him unattended.

Repeat this lesson multiple times over the next several weeks. When he seems really comfortable, attach both cross-ties to his halter. Don't progress to cross-tying your horse in the open barn aisleway until he's very good about being cross-tied in a more confined space. If he ever freaks out or reacts poorly to the ties in any way—pulling back or fighting them—go back to tying him with a single rope.

With both single ties and cross-ties, wait until he's proven himself completely trustworthy—always standing quietly and relaxed when tied, never pulling back—before tying him in spooky situations or on pavement or other potentially slippery footing. Given plenty of practice, positive reinforcement and patience, he'll get there. ☐

Jake Nodar began his horse-training career at the age of 17 at Days End Farm Horse Rescue in Woodbine, Maryland, first as a volunteer and then as the farm manager. He oversaw the care of up to 60 abused and neglected horses at a time, helping to rehabilitate them and place them in new homes. After becoming a certified trainer through John Lyons' horsemanship program in 1999, Jake started his own training business, focusing primarily on young and problem horses. In 2003, he spent a year as a working student for Olympic eventer Stephen Bradley, learning how to combine classic English training techniques with his natural-horsemanship methods. A fan of all horse sports, he's successfully competed in hunters, jumpers, dressage, eventing, Western pleasure, barrel racing and in-hand breed shows and has even tried his hand at vaulting and jousting. Jake currently works as a freelance trainer in the Darnestown, Maryland, area.

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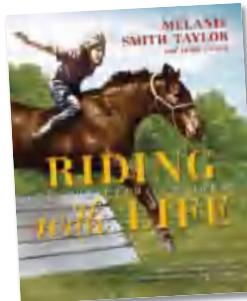
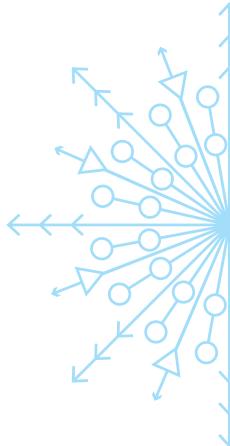


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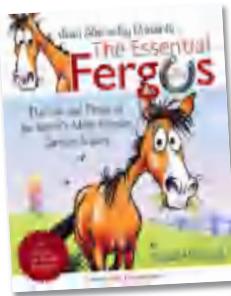
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When Two Spines Align: Dressage Dynamics:

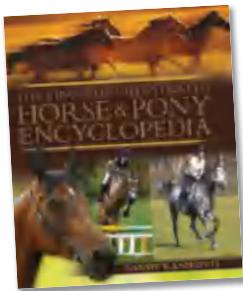
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Author Beth Baumert resolves the freedom-control enigma by taking a close look at the individual components that make up riding and dressage. The rider learns to regulate and monitor the horse’s rhythm, energy, flexion, alignment, bend, the height and length of his neck, and, finally, his line of travel by properly aligning her spine with his. When the center of gravity of a balanced rider is directly over the center of gravity of a balanced horse, that place where two spines align becomes the hub for rider and horse harmony. Hardcover, 248 pp. #ZF842, \$34.95



450 Years of the Spanish Riding School

The Spanish Riding School in Vienna celebrates its 450th anniversary in the year 2015 with this beautiful book that honors both the Riding School and its marvelous horses. Filled cover to cover with fabulous, emotionally charged color photographs, and including both English and German translations, this is a book for anyone who has ever delighted in the mystique of the White Stallions of Vienna—or who wants to know more, see more and revel fully in their magic. 208 pp., # ZF917, \$65.00

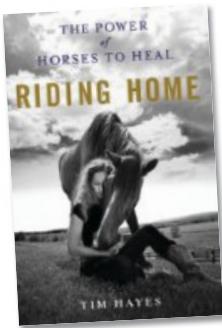


The Kingfisher Illustrated Horse and Pony Encyclopedia (Hardcover)

The Kingfisher Illustrated Horse & Pony Encyclopedia by Sandy Ransford is a fantastic gift for children who dream of having a horse or pony of their own. There is a clear introduction to the horse, followed by chapters explaining horse and pony care, riding lessons and breeds. The encyclopedia is packed full of gorgeous photographs of horses and ponies—showing how they look, what they do and where in the world they are found. And of course every horse lover wants to ride, so *The Kingfisher Illustrated Horse & Pony Encyclopedia* takes the novice rider from first mount to cantering and galloping. Recommended for ages 10 and up. #ZF927, 224 pp., \$24.99



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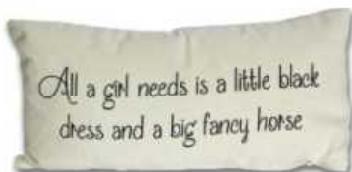
or green horse on the flat and over fences. Divided into flatwork and jumping sections, this book also features the former U.S. Olympic show-jumping team coach's observations of promising young riders in his Horsemastership Training Sessions. #ZP24, 200 pp., \$24.95



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6 Things To Do in DECEMBER

□ EXPERIENCE all Vegas has to offer at the Adequan/U.S. Dressage Federation Annual Convention, Dec. 2–5, in Las Vegas, NV. Highlights include educational sessions on training, rider fitness, saddle fit and more; networking; and keeping abreast of key issues through forums and roundtable discussions; www.usdf.org.

□ ATTEND the U.S. Eventing Association Annual Meeting, Dec. 2–6, in Washington, D.C., to learn about topics such as introducing jump-chutes, professional grooming tips and rider fitness. Also featured are discussions about key issues in the sport and the latest rule proposals and technology as well as

the Hall of Fame Dinner Saturday night; www.useventing.com.

□ WATCH the Gucci Paris Masters, Dec. 3–6, which will feature some of the world's most elite show jumpers competing in the heart of Paris. The event is part of the three-show Longines Masters Series, which also includes prestigious classes in Hong Kong and Los Angeles. Live-streaming of the show is available on its website. www.gucciparismasters.com.

□ JOIN IN at the U.S. Hunter/Jumper Association Annual Meeting, Dec. 6–10, in Orlando, FL. On the agenda: zone and affiliate meetings, rule-change sessions, commit-

tee meetings, a welcome reception and the Evening of Equestrians Awards Dinner; www.ushja.org.

□ ENTER to win a trip to Wellington, FL, to attend the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping North American League qualifier, Feb. 7. The trip includes a VIP table at the show, hotel accommodations and airfare. Enter from Nov. 1–Dec. 11 at www.PracticalHorsemag.com/wellingtontravelsweeps.

□ APPLY for the Carol Lavell Advanced Dressage Prize by Dec. 13. Up to two \$25,000 prizes will be awarded, based on merit and need, to riders who are U.S. citizens older than 21; www.dressagefoundation.org.

Greetings from AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA



© DARLEY NEWMAN

well-heeled horse enthusiasts have stayed throughout time. This genteel, historic hotel has a soothing vibe, and it is especially popular during the Aiken Steeplechase, the Aiken Trials, the Aiken Horse Show and other derbies and races.

Next, I visited the Clifford S. Gerde Carriage Museum, where you can walk among a small but impressive collection of surreys, carriages and buggies. This museum gives you a sense of Aiken's long history as a winter colony and includes carriages that winter visitors, like the Vanderbilt family, would have ridden into town.

You can then walk under 100-year-old live oaks at Hopeland Gardens, a 14-acre estate that was opened in 1969 as a public garden, to reach the Aiken Thoroughbred Racing Hall of Fame and Museum. Racing silks, photography, trophies and winning horses are on display, and I found it amusing to read about each horse and his winnings. To be in the Hall of Fame, the

horse must have spent some time during his racing career in Aiken and have won an Eclipse Award. I was happy to see Midshipman, a chestnut colt owned by Darley Stable, featured in the museum, perhaps because it's my namesake. The unusual U-shaped Gaston Livery, the only remaining barn in South Carolina with a carriage lift, is also just down the road.

Whatever equestrian attractions you visit in Aiken, I recommend stopping by Betsy's On the Corner downtown to have a milkshake. It's like stepping back in time to a cool diner, and the milkshakes are superb! You won't regret it.

Best,
Darley

Darley Newman is the founder of Equitrekking Travel, offering equestrian vacations as seen on the two-time Daytime Emmy-award-winning TV series *Equitrekking* on PBS. For more information, visit www.Equitrekking.com, www.EquitrekkingTravel.com or read Darley's blog at www.PracticalHorsemag.com.

STUDENTS IN GRADES 6-12: TAKE THE REINS AND JOIN THE IEA

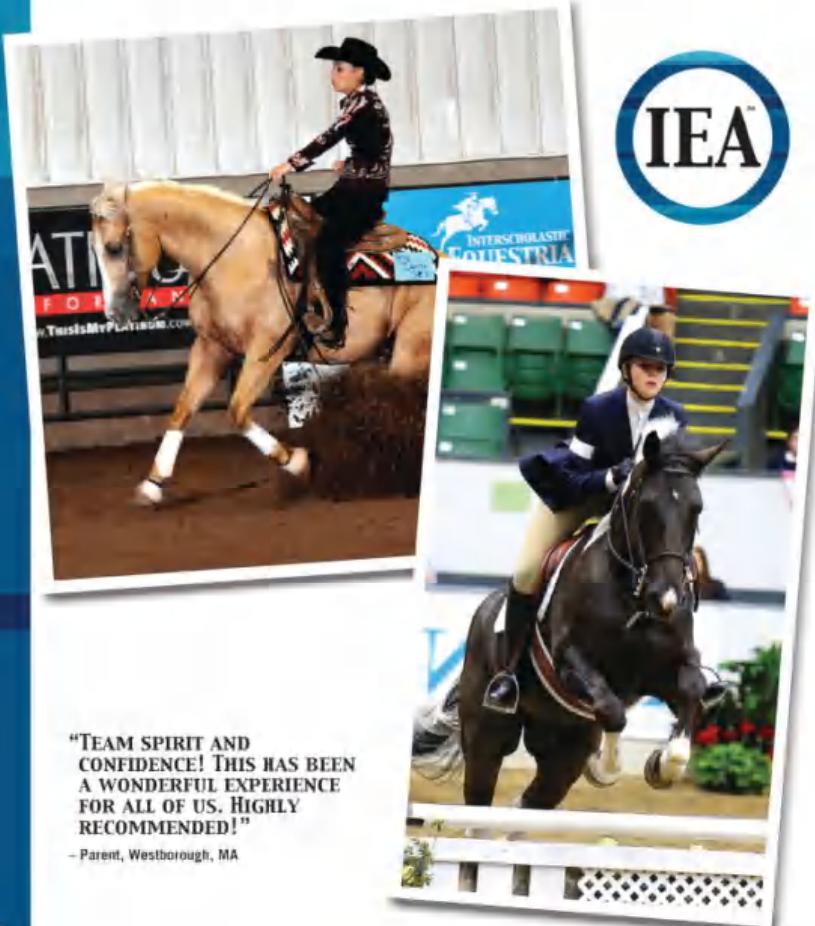
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When to Change Your DIAGONAL

By Whit Watkins

Deciding when to change your posting-trot diagonal during a direction change across the dressage ring can be slightly confusing. Some trainers suggest changing the posting-trot diagonal as soon as you leave the rail, others say to change at X and yet others instruct riders to change just before reaching the rail going in the new direction. What is correct?

High-scoring tests are made up of a multitude of small details and changing your posting diagonal smoothly is one of them. Judges don't care where you change your diagonal. They just want to see a seamless ride with no loss of balance, contact, straightness or any other disruption of the general flow of the test.

The goal is to make the change when your horse is most balanced and steady in the contact. This is more likely when he's bending, rather than straight, and when he feels the support of the rail beside him. So you want to make the change on either the turn onto or at the end of the diagonal.

Which turn is better? That depends on where your horse will be most comfortably balanced, which most likely will be when he is turning toward his "softer" side. Almost all horses are softer—easier to balance and bend—on one side than on the other. If you don't know which is your horse's better side, ride him several times on a 20-meter circle in both directions. You'll find it easier to steer him and maintain your own balance on his softer side and slightly harder and less comfortable to ride him on his stiff side.

Use this knowledge to plan your test. If your horse is softer on the right side and you're turning across the diagonal, say from K-X-M, change your diagonal in the first corner as you're bending right. If he's softer on the left side, change it in the second corner as you're bending left. And going in the other direction, say from H-X-F, if he's softer on the left, make the change in the first corner. If he's softer on the right side, make the change in the second corner.

Also consider whether your horse is steadier in the contact on one rein than on the other. Some horses get fussy when you change your posting diagonal from their "favorite" rein to the other rein. They'll make a better impression on the judge if you cross the ring on their preferred diagonal. So, for example, if you enter the first corner traveling in the direction in which your horse is usually quieter, wait until the second corner to change your diagonal. The bend around the turn will help you get him solidly on the new rein before you have to straighten. If the first turn is in the direction he doesn't prefer, plan to change your diagonal in the corner before you start across the diagonal.

Time your change carefully so it doesn't disrupt the rest of your ride. For example, if you plan to do it in the first corner, ask for a soft bend around the corner. Then

make the change as your leg passes the letter and you begin your turn off the rail and look ahead to the letter you're aiming for. If you get flustered and forget to change your diagonal, don't try to do it on the straightaway. Wait until you reach the letter on the far rail and begin your turn around the next corner. Again, take advantage of your horse's balance while he's bending. So long as you make the change before you straighten onto the short side, the judge won't mind.

Changing posting diagonals is one of those balancing acts that needs to be worked out between each horse-and-rider pair; what works with one horse may not work with another. To find what's best for you and for your horse, practice different variations at home on both short and long diagonals. Compare how your horse's balance and contact feel when you change the diagonal in the first or second corner in both directions.

Also experiment with standing up two beats rather than sitting two beats to make the change. Many riders find it easier to maintain their balance and rein contact when doing the former. Be sure to practice it at home until it's second nature before trying it in a show. And remember, the more smoothly you can change your posting diagonal, the better impression you'll make on the judge.

Based in Moody, Texas, U.S. Dressage Federation gold medalist Whit Watkins has trained with Olympian Hilda Gurney for 20 years. In 2014, she was champion and reserve champion at the Grand Prix Vintage Challenge Year-End Awards and champion in the Region 9 Open Grand Prix Championship and Open Freestyle Grand Prix Championship. Whit's students range from 3-year-old children to seniors in their 70s, and from beginners to FEI-level riders.

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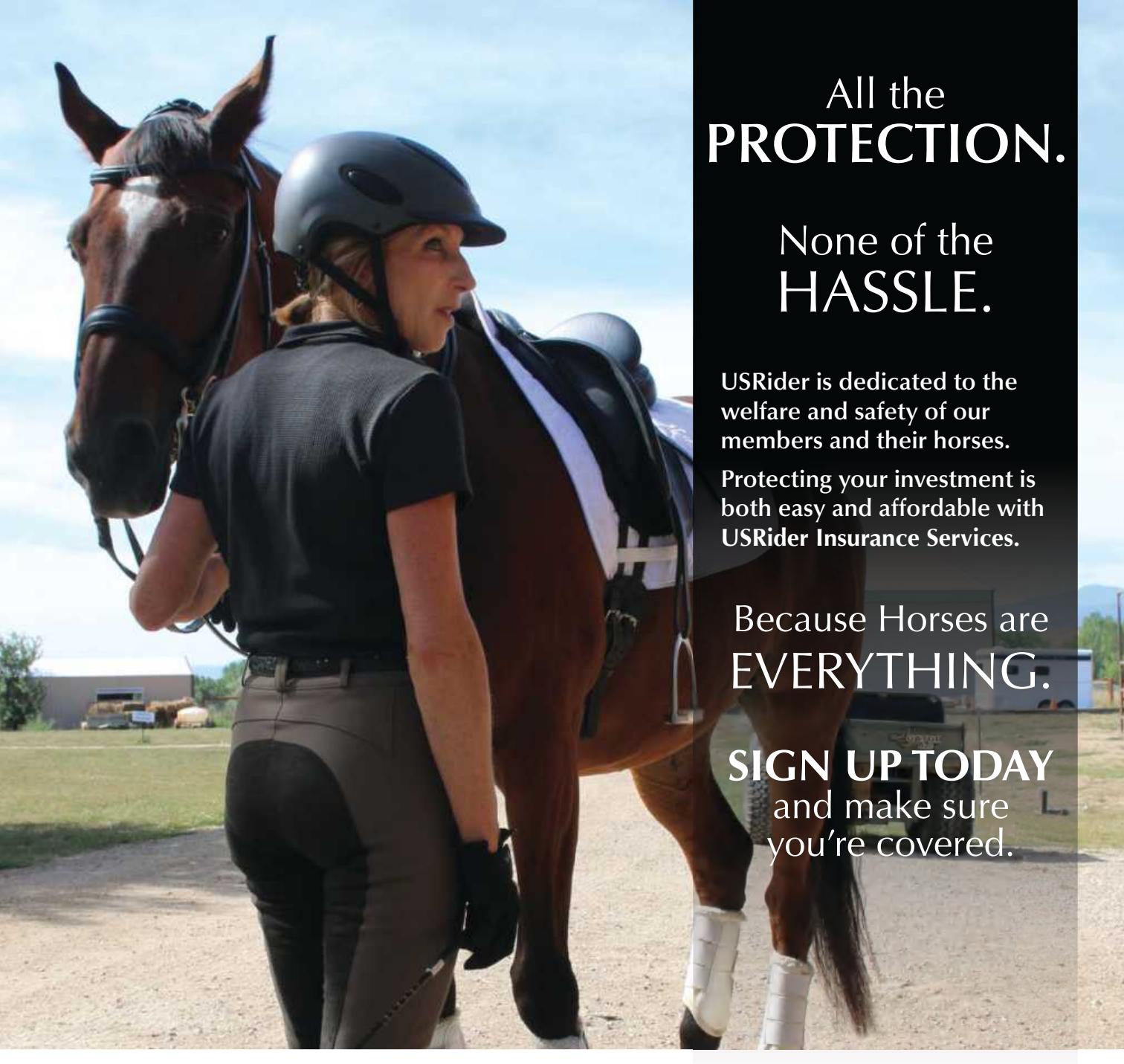


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Winner's CIRCLE

California World Cup Qualifier Results

The West Coast shows in the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping North American League continue to provide exciting entertainment as riders compete for the chance to qualify for the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Final next spring in Sweden.

Chilean rider **Samuel Parot** scored an impressive win September 26 in the Longines FEI World Cup Jumping™ Sacramento, presented by Lasher's Elk Grove Dodge Chrysler Jeep Ram.

Six out of the 24 competitors made it to the jump-off, but ultimately Parot and the 12-year-old gelding Atlantis posted the quickest round to win. The pair's jump-off time of 36.97 narrowly edged out second-place finishers **Quentin Judge** and HH Copin van de Broy.

Three weeks later, **Beezie Madden** and her longtime partner Simon were the latest pair to find success in the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping North American League, after they picked up a win in the \$150,000 Del Mar International in San Diego, California.



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Samuel Parot and Atlantis



© KIM F. MILLER

Beezie Madden and Simon

The field was filled with international stars, but Madden reinforced her ranking as the U.S.'s top-jumping athlete and the world's number two rider in the Longines Rankings by riding the fastest clear in an eight-rider jump-off. Her 37.33 time bested **Jack "Hardin" Towell's** 38.75-second round. German rider **Christian Heineking** rounded out the top three aboard NKH Quanto.

Even though she didn't get to see Towell's round before her, Madden stuck to her plan of cutting some corners to shave off time in the jump-off, playing to Simon's strengths, and adding that "indoors especially, he can be really fast with the short turns."

Montgomery Wins Blenheim Palace CIC***

U.S. eventer **Clark Montgomery** and the Irish Sport Horse gelding Loughan Glen were the victors at the Blenheim Palace International Horse Trials CCI***



© SHANNON BRINKMAN

Clark Montgomery and Loughan Glen

in Woodstock, England, in September. They first posted an impressive dressage score of 33.8. A double-clear cross-country round and a clean show-jumping round left them atop the standings.

"Glen had been super competitive in the States. We talked about it and I decided I wanted to know what it took to win over here, so we moved here a few years ago," said the British-based Montgomery. "Things went downhill for a bit at first, but we found a formula that he likes and has proven to be successful. This [win] validates everything that we have been doing."

This victory made Montgomery only the third American to win the event in its 25-year history, along with **Bruce Davidson** in 1994 and **Kim Severson** in 2001.

Three other Americans finished in the top 15. **Lauren Kieffer** and Veronica finished in sixth place, **Emily Beshear** and Shame On The Moon finished seventh and **Will Coleman** and OBOS O'Reilly were 11th.

East & West USEF Talent Search Champions

Ransome Rombauer edged out **Savannah Jenkins** by a single point to win the 2015 Platinum Performance/USEF Show Jumping Talent Search Finals West in Sep-

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tember in San Juan Capistrano, California. Partnering with **Alexis Graves' Lalonde**, she earned a final score of 351 in the four-phase event. Lalonde also won the Gulliver Trophy as the judge's choice for the best horse of the competition.

"The jumping course was long and challenging, but I nailed it. I wasn't that nervous. There wasn't time to get



© KIM E. MILLER

Ransome Rombauer and Lalonde

anxious," said Rombauer. Jenkins rode **Cristobal Collado's Vandor**.

Two weeks later, **Tori Colvin** led all four phases of the 2015 Platinum Performance/USEF Show Jumping Talent Search Finals East aboard **Betsee Parker's Avalanche** in Gladstone, New Jersey. With their score of 434, the pair topped a field of 61 riders to take home the French Leave Memorial Perpetual Trophy.

"It means a lot to win this class. This competition is more of a jumper-style test; it was an amazing experience as I move forward," said Colvin.

McKayla Langmeier earned second place with her mother's **Skyfall**. Skyfall was also awarded the Grappa Trophy for best horse at the finals.

Sixth WCHR Pro Finals Win for Stewart

For the sixth time in his career, **Scott Stewart** took the top prize in the \$5,000 World Champion Hunter Rider Professional Finals presented by Well Placed Smile at the Capital Challenge Horse Show in October in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. Stewart partnered with Reality, a stallion owned by **Alexa** and **Kristin Weisman**, for a final score of 271.99.

Havens Schatt and CH Farms LLC's **Mostly Sunny** finished just behind Stewart with 267.49 and **Jenny Karazissis** and **Emily Sukert's Tuscany** rounded out the top three with 266.69.

The WCHR Pro Finals is a unique class for hunter professionals. It features a three-round format with the first two rounds ridden on unfamiliar horses. The third round, a handy class, is ridden on the riders' own mounts.

"For me, a highlight tonight was the handy with Reality because we didn't chip the trot jump, which I had been doing all week at the same jump," said Stewart. "I've had the ride on him for six or seven years, and he's a stallion. He does the younger Amateur classes and he's just a really steady, nice hunter and a blast to ride."

Home for Every Horse Winner

Kelsey Parisi and Indian Rain Dance, an off-the-track Thoroughbred gelding, won the 2015 East Coast Equine Comeback Challenge at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show in October. For the Challenge, eight trainers took rescue horses from different organizations and trained them for 90 days and then showed off the horses' skills at the event. Each pair performed a versatility trail class followed by a two-minute freestyle program, demonstrating the work they accomplished. The



© ALICIA SMITH
Kelsey Parisi and Indian Rain Dance with the show's Shelly Mix and A Home For Every Horse's Mariah Hammerschmidt

goal of the Challenge is to showcase rescue horses as willing and competitive equine companions.

"Rain was trained for a new career, and in a way, he launched mine, showing me so much about myself and what is next," said Parisi, of Norristown, Pennsylvania, who has her own training business, ReeLee Restarting and Training. Indian Rain Dance is a 5-year-old gelding who was given to the Akindale Thoroughbred Rescue in Pawling, New York, after his retirement from the racetrack.

The Challenge is organized by the "A Home for Every Horse" project, which began as a partnership between the Equine Network and the American Horse Council's Unwanted Horse Coalition. The program helps connect rescue horses in need of homes, in over 600 rescues across the U.S., with people looking for horses. Program sponsors are Purina, Tractor Supply Company, Zoetis and Weatherbeeta. For more information, go to [www.ahomeforeveryhorse.com](http://ahomeforeveryhorse.com).

Win A Day Contest Winner Announced

Liza Green, of Dexter, Michigan, won *Practical Horseman's* Training with the

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Winner's CIRCLE

Stars: Win a Day with **Jim Wofford** and **Sharon White** contest. Green was chosen from a group of 10 finalists to receive a day of instruction from Wofford, an Olympic eventing medalist and

five-time U.S. National champion, and White, a four-star eventer.

The contest, sponsored by Blue Seal, asked entrants to submit a 250-word or less essay detailing why they deserve

to win a one-day educational clinic for themselves and nine of their friends at their barn with Wofford and White. The finalists were selected out of more than 430 entries to submit videos of themselves and their horses.

"Every eventer in southeastern Michigan ... would benefit from the wisdom of Jimmy Wofford and the talent of Sharon White. This would truly be a gift to my community as a whole," said Green, a pediatric rehabilitation doctor, in her essay.

Smith Earns First CCI* Win at Fair Hill**

Tamra Smith and Mai Baum led the field of 57 riders from start to finish at the Dutta Corp/USEF Three-Star National Championship at Fair Hill International, in October, in Elkton,

COURTESY LIZA GREEN



Liza Green won *Practical Horseman's* Win a Day with Wofford and White contest.

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Maryland. The pair added just a handful of show-jumping time penalties on Sunday to their dressage score of 38.5, after their impressive cross-country round left them fault-free. Not only was this Smith's first CCI*** win and National Championship title, but it was also Mai Baum's first CCI***.

"It's an unbelievable feeling to be sitting on him; I am blown away every time I ride him," said Smith of the 9-year-old gelding, owned by **Ellen** and **Alexandra Ahearn** and **Eric Markell**. In their first year together, they also won three FEI competitions in a row: Rebecca Farm CIC***, Copper Meadows CIC*** and Plantation Field CIC***.

Smith, who made the trip to Fair Hill from her Murietta, California, home, was pleased with her East Coast reception. "Everybody was phenomenal



© NANCY JAFFER

Tamra Smith and Mai Baum won the USEF Three-Star National Championship.

and they're just competitive. I have really enjoyed my stay."

The event was tight to the very end with less than 10 penalties separating the top four riders. Ultimately, **Phillip**

Dutton and **Mighty Nice** kept their overnight position to finish as runners-up, while **Kim Severson** and **Cooley Cross Border** moved up a single spot to third. ☀

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Therapeutic Riding Study

Can horses help children with autism? Some popular accounts have described remarkable, almost miraculous effects, but there hasn't been much research. Now a new study—a four-year randomized, controlled trial involving a substantial number of children with autism—provides solid evidence that therapeutic riding can provide specific benefits.

Autism affects roughly one of every 68 American children, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says, and the number is growing. The term "autism spectrum disorder" best captures the complex nature of this condition, which is actually a group of disorders involving brain development. Characteristics include repetitive behaviors and difficulty communicating and interacting with others, but no two cases are the same. The effects range from mild impairment to severe disability.

"There is no one right treatment for all children with autism, which complicates research to better understand which treat-

ments are effective and why," says Robin Gabriels, PsyD, the study's principal investigator. Dr. Gabriels is an associate professor at the University of Colorado Denver and program director of a specialized unit for children with developmental disabilities at Children's Hospital Colorado in Aurora. From 2007 to 2009, in partnership with the Colorado Therapeutic Riding Center, she directed a pilot study of

COURTESY, PATH INTERNATIONAL



After participating in a therapeutic riding program, children with autism spectrum disorder showed significant improvements in many areas.

the effects of therapeutic horseback riding with about 40 children with ASD. The results were promising and helped land a grant from the National Institute of Nursing Research (National Institutes of Health) and Mars-Waltham Corporation for the larger trial, also carried out at CTRC.

The children in the study, ages 6 to 16, all had a confirmed diagnosis of ASD and met other criteria set by the researchers. They were randomly assigned to one of two activities—therapeutic riding or barn activity, in which children learned about horsemanship but had no contact with horses. Both activities were taught in small groups of two to four children, with at least one volunteer per child, for 10 weekly one-hour sessions.

Instructors used visual aids and other teaching methods that

target the way ASD kids learn. Because even certified therapeutic-riding instructors are often not specifically trained to teach these children, Dr. Gabriels developed a manual. Over four years, 127 children enrolled in the study and 100 completed the 10-week program. The researchers used a battery of assessment measures to chart progress.

"I was skeptical going in because there was limited research about therapeutic riding, but the children in the riding program showed significant improvements in hyperactivity, irritability, social cognition and communication, as opposed to the barn-activity group," Dr. Gabriels said. "We also completed a six-month follow-up and found that children in the riding group maintained the gains they made in irritability, language and social communication with no further riding." This suggests that children may not need to stay in a program for an extended period, but after an initial 10 weeks, they may benefit from four or five booster lessons, she says.

Riding produced no miracles, but some component of human—equine interaction seems to help the children. Dr. Gabriels points to several possibilities.

Shared attention: Riding involves intuitive teamwork and social interaction—the horse responds to the rider's body language and the rider responds to the horse's movement. "The effects are likely enhanced by the horse's size and the demands of maintaining bilateral control and balance," she says.

Relaxation: The rhythmic movement and warmth of the horse's body may reduce stress. To find out, Dr. Gabriels recently completed a pilot study.

"This study followed the design of the previous studies, but we also assessed stress by measuring levels of the hormone cortisol in saliva samples taken before and 20 minutes after the ride or barn activity," she says. Results of that testing will be out soon. In other measures, the outcomes were the same as in the earlier research even though the

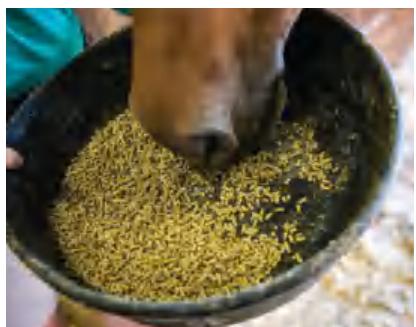
instructors and setting were different. "Families who are dealing with ASD are always looking for effective treatments," she notes. "Riding is fun and it's available in rural areas where people often have trouble getting services." Her research provides the sort of evidence that insurance companies want to see before they'll cover a therapy, and that's no small matter for these families.

Check Labels

An ingredient found in some calming supplements can put you on the wrong side of U.S. Equestrian Federation drug rules. Phenibut is a derivative of gamma aminobutyric acid (GABA), a central nervous-system depressant, and as such it's considered a forbidden substance under those rules.

Although phenibut is sold as a nutritional supplement, it's not approved as a pharmaceutical for horses or humans. The USEF sent out an alert about the substance in September after several positive findings in horses who had been given a supplement called Focus Calm from Uckele.

In a statement, Uckele said that Focus Calm has been reformulated without phenibut and that none of its other products contains the substance. The company will exchange any non-expired, original Focus Calm for the new formula. If you have some, contact Uckele at customerservice@uckele.com or (800) 248-0330.—Elaine Pascoe



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If you compete, check supplement labels to make sure what you're feeding your horse is in line with U.S. Equestrian Federation drug rules.

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The **Caterina Bridle** is part of Nunn Finer's newly launched Bella Donna Collection. This hunter bridle showcases the popular wide-noseband style with flat raised Italian leather and fancy stitching accents. It also features stainless-steel hardware and hook-stud closures. The crownpiece is wide enough for a nameplate, and fancy-stitched laced reins are included. Havana; cob, horse and oversize; \$350; www.nunnfiner.com.

Product News: Stall Refresher Gets Organic Status

Sweet PDZ® Horse Stall Refresher recently received its organic status with the Organic Materials Review Institute. The listing ensures that the stall freshener is now approved for use in organic applications.

OMRI is a nonprofit organization that offers independent reviews of products for companies around the world. Sweet PDZ is made of an all-natural, nonhazardous mineral that absorbs and neutralizes odors and ammonia, which can stress a horse's upper respiratory airway. PH

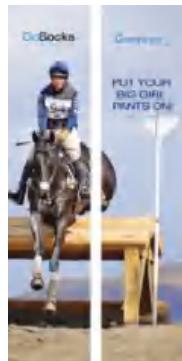


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Deck the Stalls

By Suzanne Landa

When I first signed up for a riding lesson at Foxfield in Westlake Village, California, on my 50th birthday, I didn't realize it was a gift that would give me much more—a new family of friends, horses, donkeys and dogs with lots of opportunities for fun. Twin sisters JoAnn Postel and Nancy Turrill established Foxfield in 1967 not only as a riding school but as a place to learn, share and play on and off horses regardless of age.

One of those opportunities is at Christmas: Horses, tack, stalls and barns are festively decorated by kids, parents, grandparents and friends, spearheaded by Foxfield rider Brooke Mansker, who has

generously shared ideas and organized tasks for decades. After caroling on horseback, the group gathers at a party where JoAnn and Nancy award the coveted first-place decoration award. The competition, however, often ends in a tie because the sisters love them all.

One recent Christmas, my group decided to turn our barn into "Santa's Reindeer and Horse Stable" by replacing eight stall signs with ones that read, for example, "Dancer ... Santa Claus" and then by attaching antler crowns to the heads of those eight

One Christmas, Suzanne decorated Oliver's stall with a gift bag and card stating, "Love is the best gift of all, best wrapped in carrots and apples."

stalled horses. However, we discovered a flaw: At Christmas, Santa's reindeers wouldn't be stabled because they would be busy delivering gifts around the world. Our solution—posting a sign on each reindeer's stall, "Gone to North Pole ... Return Dec. 26th." Then, right before the judging, we moved the horses in the reindeer stalls to turnout so the stalls would be empty. For Rudolph, I created a little corral at the end of the barn, complete with food, water and toys plus the note of explanation for his absence. While we won that year, it was not without the gift of ideas shared by all competitors, truly demonstrating the spirit of Christmas.

Seeing how much Foxfield families enjoyed the decorating spurred me on during the following year to decorate for other holidays, especially when my out-of-state grandchildren were in town.

To make it easy, I picked one theme for the year: All decorations focused on treats because my horse Oliver lives for them. The decorations consisted of stapling a holiday-specific plastic tablecloth to the

front of his stall and then topping it with a sign plus related cutouts and garlands. (If your barn is like ours, use staples judiciously because all must be removed.)

Valentine's Day: "Show me the love! Give ME (Ollie) your candy."

St. Patrick's Day: "I'm not Irish but for a CARROT I'll be anything you want."

Easter: "It's better to GIVE than to receive ... so give ME your candy!"

July 4th: "O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of GRAIN, for CARROTS grown abundantly, across the APPLE'd plain. America! America! Please shed these treats on me (Ollie)!"

Halloween: "My best trick ... making treats disappear!" (Empty candy bags were stapled beneath.)

Thanksgiving: "Thank you, Lord, for sunny skies and treats; a warm stall and treats; less work and MORE treats; loving humans with treats; carrots, apples, ALL treats; and for the Goodmans, especially Hannah, who is a treat. Amen" (Ollie is leased from Hannah Goodman.)

And then it was Christmas again and my barn adopted the theme of "The 12 Days of Christmas" with each day's gifts defined in terms of Foxfield including:

- On the fourth day, four foxes frolicking—the fox is our mascot.
- On the 12th day, 12 horses drilling—Foxfield's Equestrian Team includes 12 horses schooled often by their riders.

I chose the sixth day of Christmas to honor our tireless maintenance crew. After covering the back of my stall with Christmas paper, I posted the following sign with photos of each man and tributes handwritten by Foxfield riders:

"On the sixth day of Christmas, Foxfield gave to us, six guys hard-working. Thank you all and Feliz Navidad!"

This was my favorite project of all as the tribute was so well deserved.

May you have a merry time decorating your barn with family and friends. ☺

For photos, go to www.foxfield.com/boarding/15-features/52-stall-décor.



COURTESY, SUZANNE LANDA

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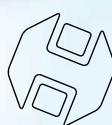
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